



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The new addition for the Echo School cost \$8 million, funded by a school bond and matching funds from the state.

## Echo School dedicates new space

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN  
STAFF WRITER

A new addition to Echo schools will be enjoyed by all the city's residents. About 150 people gathered on Aug. 22 to celebrate the school's new facility, which includes new classrooms and a new gymnasium, art room, wood and welding shop, public workout room and community center.

"This is meant to encompass what a small community is," said Raymon Smith, superintendent of Echo School District. "To meet all the needs of the community, not just one aspect."

The project, on which construction began in July 2017, cost \$8 million and was funded half by a school bond and half by a grant from the state.

After the ribbon-cutting, students and their families toured the new facility and visited their new teachers and classrooms.

Sophomore Zoe Russell said she was excited



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

A group of Echo fifth-graders hang out in their new classroom on Wednesday during an open house for the new addition of the Echo School.

to have a school and a gym that was on par with other districts.

"It's really cool and modern," she said. "I just like the space."

Keith Holman, Echo School principal and shop teacher, said the new space will allow Echo students more opportunities.

"It's given us room to do the things we've always wanted to do," he said.

Holman added that the new rooms don't accommodate more students at the school, but the district has grown.

"Right now, we have a

waiting list from kindergarten to eighth grade," he said. "Not that we don't want students, but our school board has been big that we keep small numbers."

He said Echo School currently has about 300 students.

He said the new space will help accommodate other activities, where previously teachers would have to conduct testing or reading activities with students in cramped spaces or busy areas.

"Now, we have rooms for that," he said. "It's given us an upgrade."

He added that starting this year, every student from sixth to 12th grade will receive a Chromebook laptop computer. If they get through school and graduate, they get to keep the Chromebook.

The entrance to the new building is a community center called Pioneer Hall. Smith said Echo's senior citizens had been looking for a place to gather, and this will allow them to do so.

## Northgate project still under consideration for Echo

By JADE MCDOWELL  
STAFF WRITER

The city of Echo is still getting its ducks in a row to potentially welcome a major development on the north side of the city.

The proposed 132-acre development could include as many as 48 homes, a hotel, RV park, commercial and industrial projects and amphitheater.

Developer Kent Madison briefly shared a master plan for the Northgate project at a Thursday city council meeting, but said he doesn't want to pull the trigger on it unless zoning, system development charges, annexation into the city and other issues are worked out and the project pencils out financially.

The property — currently dryland wheat — sits along Thielsen Street between the Interstate 84 interchange and the Echo Heights subdivision. Madison is proposing the project be annexed into the city and zoning to be adjusted to allow for commercial and residential development on the west side and light industrial to the east.

The zoning would be subject to approval by Oregon's Land Conservation and Development Commission.

"What I don't want to do is have this master plan, purchase the property and then have LCDC say 'No, you can't have that,'" Madison said.

City administrator Diane Berry said they may have to do some trade-outs, or agree to higher-density residential development, but city staff could assist Madison in putting together the application.

Madison does not own the property yet, but said he has an agreement with the owner to buy it if the



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL

Property on either side of Thielsen Street, the main road leading from Stanfield to Echo, would be included in the Northgate Project.

Northgate project is deemed feasible. He has already invested significant money into engineering reports and other due diligence and has been meeting with the Oregon Department of Transportation on what changes would be needed to Thielsen Street, which leads into Echo from Stanfield.

During Thursday's meeting Ed Hibbard of Anderson Perry engineering firm presented a system development charge study that sets the groundwork for the city to be able to charge system development fees on new developments. System development charges on new developments can be used to pay for new infrastructure such as water lines or to reimburse cities for infrastructure that was already built with extra capacity in anticipation of future growth.

Based on complex calculations about Echo's current infrastructure and future needs, Hibbard said Echo could justifiably charge \$13,060 per "equivalent residential unit," or the amount of water and sewer capacity that one house would typically use. The number of equivalent residential units

that the Northgate project comes out to would depend on what type of commercial and industrial projects the development attracts.

Berry said Echo was probably one of the last cities in Oregon to implement system development charges because "nothing" has been happening in Echo development-wise so it wasn't really needed.

"Basically, your potential development spurred the change," she told Madison.

The city council will vote at a future meeting on whether the city will charge the amount listed in the Anderson Perry report or, like most cities, reduce that number so it doesn't present as much of a barrier to development.

After the meeting Madison said that Echo was "moving in the right direction" as far as laying the groundwork for new development and even if in the end the Madisons decide not to go forward with the project they will feel like they helped the city prepare for other future development.

"It's moving slower than we'd like, but that's OK," he said.

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