

Hermiston enrollment on the rise

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

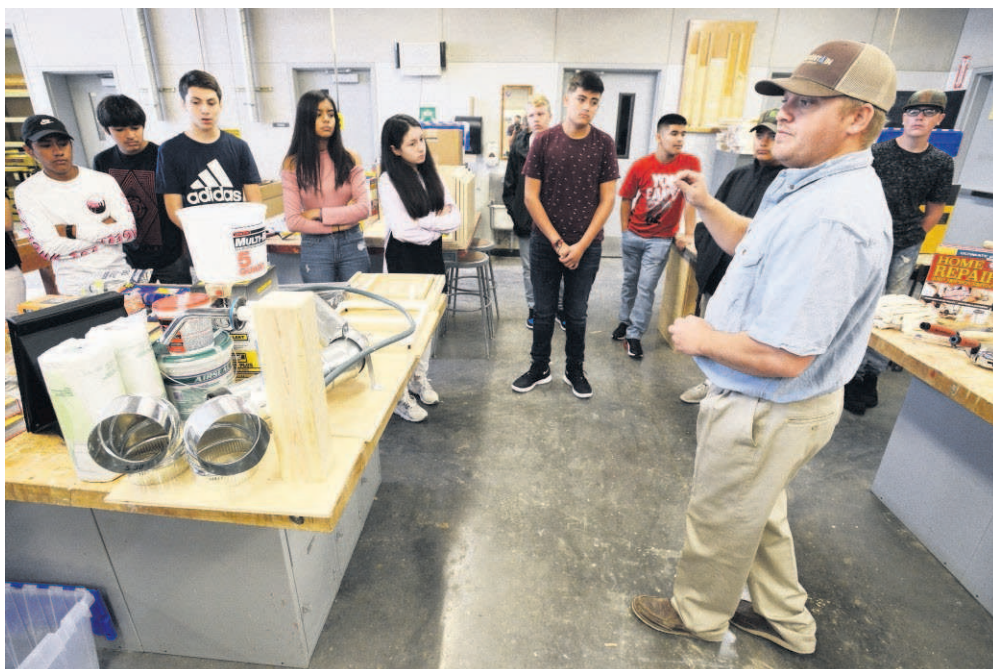
Hermiston School District enrollment continues its steady climb for another year.

At the beginning of the 2013-14 school year, the district had 5,104 students. As of this August, the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, Hermiston has 5,838 students. According to data compiled by the Hermiston School District over the past five years, enrollment usually sees a jump in the first month of the school year before trending slightly down throughout the year.

Interim Superintendent Tricia Mooney said the district contracted with Portland State University several years ago to do an enrollment study, which predicted that the district would see continued growth.

"We're increasing at the high end of what they anticipated," she said.

She attributed some of



Teacher Brent Parks gives a walk-through of the shop to new students during the first day class at Hermiston High School.

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

the growth to the influx of industry and jobs in the Hermiston area. Hermiston has seen rapid growth with the addition of new Amazon data centers, a Lamb Weston facility, and processing plants like Shearer's Foods — as well as

indirect growth, from employees who work at the Port of Morrow but live in Hermiston.

The district staff has grown as a result. Mooney said this year they added sixth grade, third grade and kindergarten positions, as

well as several new positions at the high school.

"That's where we're really going to feel the crunch next year," she said.

She said with state school funding based on the number of students in the district, or average daily

membership, there have been some distinct benefits to the growth.

"Adding modulars doesn't give us extra gym space, or extra cafeteria space. These things can be drawbacks to increasing enrollment."

Tricia Mooney,
Interim Superintendent

"We've been able to grow programs," she said. "Obviously when we add 30 students, they're not all in one grade. They're spread out."

She said they've seen growth in the high school's career technical education program, as well as the ability to have music and physical education programs at every level — things schools with declining enrollment often have to cut.

But growth has also pressed the district up against facilities that are struggling to hold all its students. The addition of modulars alleviates the need for some classroom space, Mooney said, but not room for other activities.

"Adding modulars doesn't give us extra gym space, or extra cafeteria space," she said. "These things can be drawbacks to increasing enrollment."

A failed bond in May 2017 was intended to address capacity issues, but the district will likely consider another new bond in the near future.

Urban renewal will get own line on tax statement

By ANTONIO SIERRA
STAFF WRITER

When Hermiston and Pendleton residents see a new line on their November property tax statements, the Umatilla County Assessment and Taxation Department doesn't want them to fret.

Due to a calculation error discovered by a recent audit, the urban renewal districts in Pendleton and Hermiston have never been their own line item on a tax statement.

Now it will, and Paul Chalmers, the Umatilla

County director of assessment and taxation, said it shouldn't cause anyone's tax bills to go up.

"It's not going to cost anyone anything more," he said. "That's the beauty in all of this."

Instead of creating a new tax, the new taxing system will take small amounts from each taxing district that overlaps with the urban renewal districts — entities such as Umatilla County and Blue Mountain Community College — and reallocate them to the urban renewal district line.

While the other taxing

districts will be forgoing some revenue, Chalmers said it shouldn't be significant and the amount of money going to each urban renewal district should be the same.

"What's going to the urban renewal district is not compromised by this development," he said.

Pendleton and Hermiston are the only cities in the county that have urban renewal districts, which encompass each city's downtown core.

Under an urban renewal district, the property tax base is "frozen" for the

duration of the district. Whatever money is made on top of the frozen level due to increasing property values goes directly to the urban renewal district instead of being split between the usual lineup of taxing districts. The money is then used for projects designed to increase property values in the district even further.

Hermiston's urban renewal district began in 2013 and will wind down in 2033. Projects it has funded so far include facade grants and the new festival street next to city hall.

DEATHS

Carole Janette Hamilton

Hermiston
Feb. 28, 1939 - Sept. 7, 2018

Carole Janette Hamilton, 79, of Hermiston died Friday, Sept. 7, 2018, in Richland, Wash. She was born Feb. 28, 1939, in La Grande. A celebration of life gathering was held. Arrangements by Burns Mortuary of Hermiston, Oregon. Sign the condolence book at burnsmortuaryhermiston.com.

James D. 'Jim' Miller

Hermiston
Nov. 23, 1942 - Sept. 9, 2018

James D. "Jim" Miller, 75, of Hermiston died Sunday, Sept. 9, 2018, at his home. He was born Nov. 23, 1942, in Fairbury, Nebraska. Viewing will be held Friday, Sept. 14 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Burns Mortuary chapel in Hermiston. Arrangements by Burns Mortuary of Hermiston, Oregon. Sign the condolence book at burnsmortuaryhermiston.com.

Roy A. Taylor Sr.

Hermiston
June 4, 1936 - Sept. 9, 2018

Roy A. Taylor Sr., 82, of Hermiston died Sunday, Sept. 9, 2018, at his home. He was born June 4, 1936, in Julesburg, Colorado. A private family celebration will be held. Arrangements by Burns Mortuary of Hermiston, Oregon. Sign the condolence book at burnsmortuaryhermiston.com.

Nora Ann Shipley

Umatilla
Jan. 25, 1944 - Aug. 28, 2018

Nora Ann Shipley, 74, of Umatilla died Tuesday, Aug. 28, 2018, in Umatilla. She was born Jan. 25, 1944, in Ontario. A graveside gathering of family and friends will be held Sunday, Sept. 16 at 11 a.m. at Sunset Hills Cemetery, Umatilla. Arrangements by Burns Mortuary of Hermiston, Oregon.

Karen M. Jones Southmayd

Richland, Wash.
Dec. 10, 1944 - Aug. 25, 2018

Former area resident Karen M. Jones Southmayd, 73, of Richland, Wash., died Saturday, Aug. 25, 2018. She was born Dec. 10, 1944, in Spokane, Wash. No services are planned at this time.



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