



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The City of Hermiston and Umatilla County have decided to part ways in the management of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston.

## City adding more offices to EOTEC

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
STAFF WRITER

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center will once again be under construction next year as Knerr Construction builds offices for the Umatilla County Fair and improves the on-site RV park.

The Hermiston City Council chose the Hermiston-based construction firm Monday to manage both projects, using a bid-design-build process. The city promised to build office and storage space for the fair as part of an agreement forged last year when Umatilla County pulled out of EOTEC and gave full ownership to the city. The city also hopes that adding the needed utility hookups to the RV park will open up more revenue opportunities.

John Eckhardt of Knerr Construction told the city he felt “really confident” that the projects could be completed before the 2019 fair.

“I think it’s very doable,” he said.

City councilors said they hoped it was done sooner than the day before the fair, a reference to the completion of EOTEC before its inaugural 2017 fair. Knerr Construction oversaw the barns portion of EOTEC back then. City staff recommended Knerr over the two other firms that submitted proposals, citing Knerr’s local office, past experience with EOTEC and experience with the bid-design-build method.

During Monday’s meeting the city council also approved a joint facilities agreement with Hermiston

School District. Larry Fetter, parks and recreation director, said the agreement formalizes many shared uses of city and district facilities that are already in place, such as city use of school gyms for its basketball programs.

However, Fetter said there were some adjustments, including the end of janitorial fees for using the school gyms.

“The power behind this agreement is that there is no exchange of fees,” he said.

Larry Usher, Hermiston School District’s athletic director, said the district is “very, very excited” about the new possibilities for partnerships opened up by the agreement. He pointed to the example of the new program that sent all Hermiston second-graders for a swimming and water safety lesson at the aquatic center last month.

“It’s unbelievable what it’s going to do for our kids,” he said. “... This program more than likely has saved a kid’s life.”

Nearly 400 students participated in the program and were handed a voucher for swim lessons for only \$10 next summer. Pool manager Kasia Robbins said of all the district’s second graders, 84 percent were in the “high risk” category when assessed, meaning that if they fell into a swimming pool with no one around to pull them out they would not be expected to survive.

City councilor Doug Primmer said in his 35 years as a water rescue professional with law enforcement he has seen far too many drownings, and he can’t praise the new water

safety program enough. He and other councilors asked city staff to look into what they could do to expand the program, possibly by opening the pool a little earlier in the spring and bringing another grade level through.

Before Monday’s regular city council meeting, the council held a work session that included a presentation from Hermiston Public Library director Mark Rose.

Rose said the library is working on some strategic planning, and the city council would likely see some funding requests during next year’s budget process.

He said the library is facing growth challenges as Hermiston’s population expands. The library has about 40,000 physical items for check-out, which is below the per capita amount recommended. There are also challenges with space.

“Just like you want a number of books per people in the community, you also want a number of seats, and we’re well below that,” he said.

Rose said he would like to consider moving the children’s section downstairs, which would keep adults from being bothered by noise from young children and help parents feel less worried that their child will be a disruption if they bring them to the library. It would also increase shelf space for more books and other materials.

Rose said he would also like to see the library’s hours expanded. Currently it is open 46 hours a week, but Rose said he would like to bring that number above 50 for starters, if he can get the budget for it.

**Gunner Olsen of Big River Golf Course** in Umatilla. The **Big River Men’s Club** presented the course superintendent with a shiny new cup cutter and broken tee receptacles for each hole, said **Megan Olsen**, the course’s general manager.

Also, Megan reminds area golfers that 2019 annual memberships are now available. For those who get linked up prior to Thursday, Nov. 15, they will receive a discount. For more information, contact the pro shop at 541-922-3006, [megan@golfbigriver.com](mailto:megan@golfbigriver.com) or stop by the course at 709 Willamette Ave., Umatilla.

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**Marie Cain**, dairy & livestock controller at **Threemile Canyon Farms** in Boardman, is among the 30 participants of the second class of **REAL Oregon (Resource Education & Ag Leadership)**. A collaboration of industry and other groups from across the state, REAL Oregon is working to develop and support leaders within

Oregon’s natural resource communities. In addition to networking opportunities and learning more about Oregon’s diversity, the program brings current and future leaders together from agriculture, fishing, and forestry for a series of sessions across the state — including Feb. 12-14 in Boardman.

“We are beginning to fulfill the vision of building a solid network of agriculture and natural resource leaders who will benefit the state for many years to come,” said **Greg Addington**, REAL Oregon executive director.

Class 2 starts in November and will graduate in March 2019. Recruitment of Class 3 begins shortly after that. For more information, contact 541-892-1409, [addingtonconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:addingtonconsulting@gmail.com) or visit [www.realoregon.net](http://www.realoregon.net).

*You can submit items for our weekly By The Way column by emailing your tips to [editor@hermistonherald.com](mailto:editor@hermistonherald.com).*

city,” said councilor John Kirwan, who is the council liaison to the public infrastructure committee. He said there were originally \$27 million in projects on the committee’s list.

Mayor David Drotzmann said that people take for granted having water every time they turn on their tap, but it costs money to make that happen.

“We do have some failing infrastructure to address, especially as the city continues to grow,” he said. “If we

don’t approve these things then we have emergencies, and where does that revenue come from?”

Morgan said in looking at 31 comparable cities in Oregon, Hermiston’s rates were the second-lowest this summer. The new rate increase will put Hermiston at 11th-lowest in that group, assuming that no other cities raise their rates between now and March.

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STAFF PHOTO BY JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN

Gregory Anderson and Emily Wadkins dressed up as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles for Tuesday’s homecoming dress-up day, “kickin’ it with your crew” — where students were asked to dress up as a group.

## HOME

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social media.

“My favorite way to promote the events is face-to-face,” said leadership student Isel Tejada Urenda. “Asking students, ‘do you have your outfit, do you need costume ideas?’ Building connections that way.”

Students had another common cause to unite them for Homecoming this year. One of their classmates, junior Jasmine Ellwood, has been battling Ewing Sarcoma, a type of cancer. Ellwood was recently elected to the Homecoming court.

Ellwood’s sister, Alysha, is a student in Hermiston’s leadership class.

“I was thinking about everything she’s been through, and how her life

has changed,” she said. “I went on Twitter, and started posting about electing her. And it really took off.”

Alysha said her sister didn’t find out until she had been nominated.

She said the school had rallied behind her sister.

“She’s really happy about it,” Alysha said. “She’s going to be at the assembly, the football game and the dance.”

Though there are some new events every year, the event is also about tradition. Each year on the football field, current athletes are joined at the beginning of the game by several honorary captains. Because this year’s seniors are the Class of 2019, the athletics staff chooses representatives from former classes ending in “9”. This year there are honorary captains from four past classes — Luis Ortiz for the class of

2009, Micah Mercer for the class of 1999, Scott Ramsay for the class of 1979, and Charlie Grabeel for the class of 1969.

In a new twist this year, the department also selected two honorary captains from the class of 2029 — Alex Gonzalez and Grason Edwards, who are second graders at Highland Hills this year.

“Everything we do here is about getting people excited about athletics,” said Athletic Director Larry Usher.

The honorary captains are introduced before the game, along with a short biography. They also participate in the coin toss, and are invited to sit in reserved seats, and participate in the team dinner.

“It’s also a way for our current football players to see those who paved the way for them,” Usher said.

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## BTW

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candidates **Rick Pullen** and incumbent **George Murdock** will participate, along with Hermiston City Council Ward 1 candidates **Mark Gomolski** and incumbent **Lori Davis**.

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The **Columbia Grange** is hosting a fundraiser to help support community service projects, including giving dictionaries to third graders, **Pet Rescue** and the **Hermiston Warming Station**.

The event is Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the grange hall, 32339 Diagonal Blvd., Hermiston. It features an all-you-can-eat breakfast for \$6, lunch for varying prices, and a flea market and craft sale. Also, people can rent vendor space for \$8.

For more information, call Pat at 541-567-5706 or Clare at 541-278-0615.

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Christmas came early for

## WATER RATES

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for sewer than law offices, instead of everyone paying a flat fee. Small water users will no longer subsidize large users getting a bulk discount. Basing bills more on usage also encourages conservation in a critical groundwater area.

“I think this is probably the fairest, most equitable plan we could come up with the address needs in the