

Building official may impose fines

Enforcement option will work much like nuisance ordinance

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

The city of Hermiston added some teeth to its building code enforcement during a city council meeting last week.

The council passed an ordinance allowing its building official to issue civil penalties for violations of the building code.

City Manager Byron Smith said the ordinance before the council at their Nov. 13 meeting would institute a system similar to the city's nuisance code enforcement, including warnings and opportunities to appeal.

"We need to have an enforcement mechanism," he said.

Under the ordinance unanimously passed by the council, the building official will be able to issue stop work orders, revoke permits, order vacation of unsafe premises or issue fines after the official has made "reasonable attempts to secure voluntary correction."

Hermiston's current building official is Chuck Woolsey.

Prohibited acts that could draw a penalty include violating building codes, building without a required permit, lying on applications for permits or ignoring a lawful order from the building official.

According to the ordinance, "Violation of a provision of this chapter shall be subject to an administrative civil penalty not to exceed more than \$5,000 for each offense or, in the case of a continuing offense, not more than \$1,000 for each day of the offense."

The council also approved a plan for sidewalk in-fill.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said over the summer an intern from



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL.

A section of worn-down grass on Orchard Avenue across from the Hermiston Post Office shows one area the city is considering including in its sidewalk in-fill program.

Anderson Perry & Associates created an inventory of every sidewalk in the city, creating a map that shows gaps in the city's sidewalk system.

The city has required developers to add sidewalks to developments since the 1970s, so Morgan said gaps around town are in front of undeveloped lots or properties developed prior to the 1970s.

The city attempted a pilot program offering to match between 30 percent and 75 percent of the cost of a sidewalk on properties in the Newport Park neighborhood and got "exactly zero interest," Morgan said. The question now is whether the city wanted to pay for sidewalks in high-traffic areas.

"It is going to be difficult to look developers in the eye and say 'You're going to have to put in a sidewalk, but we did just pay for one in front of this property,'" he said.

On the other hand, Morgan said, there were sections in town where a homeowner had little incentive to shell out thousands of dol-

lars for a sidewalk but the public would greatly benefit from the increased accessibility and safety. He used the example of a property on Orchard Avenue near the post office where pedestrians had to choose between walking on the street or on someone's grass.

Morgan recommended the city begin budgeting \$30,000 for projects on main roads with high foot traffic, where filling in "bite-sized pieces" of sidewalk would create long interrupted sidewalks. The first recommended project would be four small sections of Orchard Avenue during the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Morgan also recommended that the city use private contractors so that the street department's time wouldn't be tied up.

Mayor David Drotzmann asked if corporations located along sidewalk-free areas such as Elm Avenue and First Place could be asked to contribute money toward sidewalks.

Morgan said the city could always ask if they would be interested in a

partnership with the city.

Councilor Roy Barson asked if the city would consider a larger project around Sandstone Middle School, where he has heard complaints about the lack of sidewalks for children walking to school.

Smith said the city has applied for some Safe Routes to Schools grants that could help with larger projects like that.

The council unanimously approved the recommendation to start budgeting money each year for sidewalk in-fill.

The council also heard a short update from Umatilla Electric Cooperative CEO Robert Echenrode. He said UEC is the tenth-fastest growing electric cooperative in the nation in terms of kWh sold and its workforce has increased 20 percent since 2010. He said the cooperative's rates are 38 percent below the national average.

"We have a distinct advantages in the area, and we hope to be able to continue to leverage that," he said.

Festival of Trees plants holiday spirit

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
COMMUNITY EDITOR

The unofficial kick-off to the holiday season in Hermiston is just around the corner.

Although tickets are all sold out for the Festival of Trees gala event's dinner, people can still come out and place bids on beautifully decorated trees, themed gift baskets, stockings and wreaths. In addition, the Family Day is open to everyone. And, tickets are available for a chance to win a special raffle tree.

The gala event is Saturday, Dec. 1 at the Hermiston Community Center, 415 S. Highway 395. It begins at 6 p.m., with dinner served at 7 p.m. People without dinner tickets are invited to arrive prior to the start of the live auction at 8 p.m. A no-host bar will be available.

About two dozen trees are available — each with a creative theme. People can bid on such large creations, complete with gifts: "Christmas Season at the Farm," "A Merry Magical Mashup" and "Happy Trails." The smaller trees are just as sweet, including "The Chocolate Connoisseur," "Love the Wine You're With" and "Pair-a-dice."

With a theme of "Down on the Farm," tickets for the raffle tree are \$10 each. The drawing will be held during Family Day — and the winner doesn't have to be present. Money raised will be used to upgrade "Kiwaniis Falls," a Highway art feature near Umatilla.

Money raised from the Festival of Trees is split between the Hermiston Kiwanis and the Good Shepherd Community

Health Foundation. Money supports a variety of projects in giving back to the community. In addition, the Festival of Trees Caring Community Sponsorship will provide a donation to Hermiston/Pendleton Special Olympics. The program offers athletic training and competitions for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Activities sure to spread holiday spirit are featured during Family Day. Also, the large trees from the gala event will be available for viewing.

Family Day is Sunday, Dec. 2, from noon to 4 p.m., also at the community center. A fundraiser for the Soroptimist International of the Greater Hermiston, there is a suggested donation of \$5 per family — however, no one will be turned away. A pair of local Boy Scout troops will run a snack shack with food available for purchase.

Music will fill the air and activities will be scattered throughout the community center. Kids will be able to check out stations with different holiday-themed fun, including creating their own Christmas ornaments and decorate cookies. In addition, kids can make gift bags and tags and spin art. In addition to sharing their Christmas wish lists with Santa, they can pose for photos. The pictures will be available for pick-up at a later date at 60 Minute Photo.

The Soroptimists work to improve the lives of women and girls. Money raised will help fund scholarships for women in need.

For more information about the Festival of Trees, search Facebook.

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Family Health Associates opens second location

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

A new Family Health Associates medical clinic in Umatilla is expected to provide faster and more convenient care for Umatilla residents.

The clinic, located at the Umatilla Hospital District building at 1890 7th St., opens Thursday. The public was invited to an open house on Tuesday night and toured the building's six exam rooms, procedure room and storage and office areas.

Clinic manager Jolene Lloyd said the new clinic will help FHA better serve its Umatilla patients, but it also helps relieve some crowding at their Hermiston location on the Good Shepherd Health Care System campus.

"We have space issues in Hermiston because we've

grown so much," she said. "We're practically Velcro-ing employees to the ceiling, so this will free up some space."

Dr. Derek Earl, FHA's medical director, said they have about 1,200 patients from Umatilla, so opening up a location there was a "natural fit." He said they already had 35 patients scheduled to be seen in the first two days the new clinic will be open.

"We're excited to be here," he said.

The building was originally occupied by Encore Wellness 4 Life, which provided medical care under a contract with the Umatilla Hospital District. When the district decided to end its contract with Encore and put out a request for proposals, Family Health Associates was one of several entities that submitted one, Earl

said. The Umatilla clinic will offer all of the same services as the Hermiston location — including physicals, casting, minor procedures, pediatrics and concussion care — with the exception of their cosmetic clinic.

Lloyd said patients should still call the main line at 541-567-6434 to schedule appointments. Umatilla taxpayers whose money funds the Umatilla Hospital District will be "fast-tracked" for appointments with FHA, Lloyd said, as part of the agreement with the hospital district.

Shera Salverda, a primary care nurse practitioner, will provide care in Umatilla Monday through Wednesday while the rest of FHA's providers will take turns

covering Thursday and Friday. The clinic will be open from 7:45 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 7:45 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Fridays.

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