

Christmas arrives downtown



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL

City of Hermiston and Umatilla Electric Cooperative employees lower a giant Christmas tree into a special hole built into the new festival street. The tree, which arrived Monday morning after being donated from parks manager Jason Barron's yard, will debut at a holiday celebration and tree lighting ceremony Dec. 6 at 6 p.m. next to city hall, 180 NE Second St.

City postpones electric rate increase

Hermiston council to vote Dec. 10 whether to increase rates by \$2 a month

By JADE MCDOWELL
STAFF WRITER

The Hermiston City Council postponed voting on a rate increase for Hermiston Energy Services Monday in order to gather more information about the utility's costs.

The council plans to vote on the proposed \$2 per month increase during their Dec. 10 meeting instead, but City Manager Byron Smith said staff would likely still recommend a Jan. 1 implementation date for the increase.

Hermiston Energy Services general manager Nate Rivera told the council that about 52 percent of HES's expenses go toward purchasing wholesale power from Bonneville Power Administration, while about 17 percent of their costs come from their contract for services with Umatilla Electric Cooperative, 12 percent goes toward the utility's debts and 11 percent goes toward system maintenance. HES pro-

vides power to about 63 percent of Hermiston.

Since 2009, Rivera said, BPA's rates for wholesale power have gone up almost 39 percent, and another five percent increase is expected in 2019. Increasing wholesale power costs, along with maintenance needs as HES infrastructure ages, have put HES on the path for a projected \$157,151 deficit during the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

With that in mind, Rivera is recommending that the city increase residential base rates from \$14 a month to \$16 a month, while keeping the charge for kilowatt-per-hour on top of that base rate the same. He also recommended an increased base rate from \$35 to \$37 for small commercial users, a slight increase in demand charges for large commercial users and an industrial base rate increase from \$200 to \$250. Rivera said HES does not currently have any industrial users, and "those rates fully represent what it would cost to bring them into our system."

HES began in 2001 and first raised rates in 2005. The next rate increase was 10.95

percent in 2015 and 2.5 percent in 2016. The increase proposed for Jan. 1 would represent a 2.56 percent increase.

Rivera said the increase would have been higher, but HES saved a combined \$3 million on a refinance of its bond debt and savings on construction costs compared to what had been originally budgeted.

However, he also said the increase before the council Monday did not factor in whatever amount BPA increases its wholesale power rates by in 2019, or what costs might be added to HES by a capital improvement plan in the works — meaning he would likely be in front of the council a year from now asking for another increase.

Mayor David Drotzmann said he didn't like the idea of continuing to go back to customers with more rate changes each year, and city councilors pointed out that it was unfortunate timing with the recent rate increase for water and sewer that will kick in March 2019.

Smith said staff thought it was better to raise rates only as needed.

"The council had previously said they didn't want to wait, and see those 11 percent increases," he said.

Councilor John Kirwan said he wanted to see a more specific breakdown of how the customer's bill was divided between different costs such as wholesale power and construction. He asked that the council postpone a vote on the increase until their next meeting so that Rivera could come back with that breakdown and a better explanation of how the savings from construction and the bond refinance were being used.

The council voted 6-1 to table the resolution. Councilor Manuel Gutierrez was the dissenting vote, after pointing out that a Dec. 10 vote for a Jan. 1 increase would not give customers much time to prepare.

Included in the resolution was a new program that, if passed, would allow customers to pre-pay their electric bill with HES. Rivera said customers who prepaid at least \$25 of their first bill would be able to avoid the \$250 deposit that new customers are usually required to provide.

Write-in options deliver variety in candidate choices

By PHIL WRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

Umatilla County Commissioner Larry Givens received 595 out of 783 write-in votes in the Nov. 6 election. He may have received another 20 or so write-ins, but the county Elections Division could not allocate those names to his total.

Elections staff certified the tallies from the general election Wednesday morning. The results confirmed Givens' write-in campaign to retain the position 2 seat on the county board needed about 14,000 more votes to defeat John Shafer, the mayor of Athena, who received 15,025 votes, a tick more than 95 percent of the total.

While nearly 600 ballots displayed "Larry Givens," eight voters wrote in "Larry Gibbons," the same number who wrote in Mickey Mouse and Rick Pullen, the challenger in the race for the position 1 seat on the county board. Tom Bailor, former commissioner candidate, had 10 write-ins. Another six voted for "Givens," and one person each voted for "Larry Givons," "L. Givens," "Larry Gibens," "Gibbons" and "Gibens."

County elections manager Kim Lindell said at first glance those names could all be for Commissioner Givens, but elections staff cannot make those assumptions.

"There could be a Larry Gibbons," she said. "That could be an actual person."

Likewise, L. Givens could mean a Linda or Louise as a Larry. She also questioned if voters who wrote in some versions of the name knew who they were voting for. When in doubt, she said, the elections office puts names in their own line in the tally.

Just like Mickey and his buddy, Goofy, who ended up with one vote. Lindell said Mickey Mouse remains the most popular cartoon character that people write in.

Goofy should not feel too bad. Bruce Wayne, Ms. America — the title, not the actual person — John Wayne, Tom Hanks, Dwayne Johnson, Barack Obama and "Basic Campfire" received single votes as well in the county commissioner race, as did local real-life character Mark

Gomolski of Hermiston and Rex Morehouse of Pendleton.

Every race with a candidate on the ballot comes with a line for voters to write in someone else. But the elections department does not break out the write-ins for all races. In state races for supreme court judge, for example, the write-ins are too few to matter. Lindell said just about every big-name wrestler from the 1980s appeared on those ballots, from Andre the Giant to Randy Savage.

"If they are not going to put people on the ballot, they need to make sure people are writing names in the right places."

Kim Lindell,
County elections manager

"We look at every ballot and any write-in," she said.

Adams and Helix residents continued to follow their tradition of using write-in votes to decide who will serve as major and city councilors.

M. Dane Holmes remains the mayor of Adams with eight votes out of 40. Nine candidates received two votes each. And Kim Herron won the mayor's seat in Helix with nine out of 37 write-ins.

Jeff Rost won in the race for Adams City Council, taking 13 of the 47 votes. Monica Curtiss ran away from the field for position 4 on the Helix City Council, taking 22 of the 30 votes. Glen Tipton took the position 5 seat on the Helix City County with 19 of 29 votes, and Julie Harper received 20 out of 31 votes for position 6.

Lindell said the tradition can be troublesome. Past elections resulted in one person winning two seats.

"If they are not going to put people on the ballot," she said, "they need to make sure people are writing names in the right places."

WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO
5 Theater Cineplex
Check wildhorseresort.com for showtimes
\$5 Matinee Classics Every Wednesday
Credit & Debit Cards accepted
Cineplex gift cards available
541-966-1850
Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216

Join us for **WINTER MARKET AT THE SAGE CENTER**

Ladies Night Out
Door Prizes, Live Music, Refreshments
30 November
4pm - 7:30pm

Family Day
Photo Booth, SAGE Exhibits
1 December
9am - 4pm

FREE admission both days

101 Olson Road in Boardman, Oregon

Boutique Clothing, Handmade Gifts, Home Decor

Beauty Products, Specially Items, Jewelry & More!

Sponsored by: SAGE CENTER, PORT VIEW

23rd Annual **CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE**
TWO DAYS ONLY!
SUNDAY DEC. 2ND • 1PM - 4PM
MONDAY DEC. 3RD • 9AM - 5PM
FREE GIFT WITH PURCHASE! (WHILE SUPPLIES LAST)

- DOOR PRIZES! • HOLIDAY SNACKS & TREATS
- ENTER TO WIN ALIVE & WELL GIFT CARDS!
- EVERY \$25 PURCHASE GETS A TICKET TO WIN!
- A MELISSA & DOUG DINOSAUR!

10% OFF Health Foods, Bulk Foods & Supplements!
25% OFF Andalou Products, Books, Bibles, Children's Books, CDs & DVDs

30% OFF Christmas Gifts & Décor, Home Décor, Clothing, Baby Items, Jewelry, Kitchen Items, Prints, Wall Décor Purses, Lamps, Luxury Lite Candles, E-cloth, Vim & Vigor, Toys & More

SEASONS OF SAVINGS TUESDAY-FRIDAY
POP A BALLOON FOR SAVINGS UP TO 40% OFF GIFTS, HOME DECOR & CHRISTMAS

ALIVE & WELL 541-567-0272
2150 N. First St. • Hermiston

MEDICAL DIRECTORY
To advertise in the Medical Directory, please call:
Jeanne at 541-564-4531 or Aundra at 541-564-4538

MENTAL HEALTH
LET US BE THE ONE THAT HELPS!

LIFEWAYS HELPING PEOPLE

- Adult, Child and Family Therapy
- Psychiatric Evaluation and Treatment
- Mental Health and Crisis Services
- Confidential and Professional Care

LIFEWAYS PENDLETON 331 SE 2nd St., Pendleton, OR 97801
Office: 541-276-6207

LIFEWAYS HERMISTON 595 NW 11th St., Hermiston, OR 97838
Office: 541-567-2536

Crisis Phone: 866-343-4473
WWW.LIFEWAYS.ORG

PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

Call Today!
541-289-5433
1060 W. Elm, Suite #115, Hermiston, OR
(across from Good Shepherd Medical Center)
www.apd4kidz.com
Office Hours: Mon-Fri 8am-4pm

Advanced PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

CareCredit, Visa, Mastercard, Discover, American Express

URGENT AND FAMILY CARE
HERMISTON FAMILY MEDICINE & URGENT CARE

Sports & Dot Physicals • Minor Injuries • Family Care • Minor Surgeries
We accept Medicare & some Advantage Medicare plans

NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY

HOURS: Mon-Sat. 7:30am-7:00pm
541-567-1137 236 E. Newport, Hermiston (across from U.S. Bank)

VISION CARE
EYE HEALTH & VISION CARE

Robert D. Rolen, O.D., LLC
Optometric Physician

115 W. HERMISTON AVE., SUITE 130
541-567-1837

FAMILY DENTISTRY

DESERTDENTAL

Family Dentistry
~New Patients Welcome~
541-567-8161
995 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston

Ryan M. Wieseler, D.D.S.