

YEAR

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than its share of violence in the early hours of June 4. Just hours apart, police responded to a stabbing, and two unrelated gunshot deaths. The two victims of the stabbings recovered, and the perpetrator has since been charged. No suspect has been publicly named in either shooting death.

After months of debate by school board and community members, Hermiston High School's Class of 2018 walked across the stage at Kennewick's Toyota Center. The board voted to continue holding graduation there in subsequent years to accommodate the growing student body.

An early-morning fire destroyed much of the Hermiston Seventh-day Adventist church, engulfing the entire west side of the building. Fire Marshal Scott Goff said foul play was not suspect, and the culprit was thought to be a lamp too close to a wooden table.

On June 27, Umatilla city manager Russ Pelleberg resigned to pursue a new job in Washington. Community development director Tamra Mabbott served as an interim city manager until David Stockdale was hired in September.

JULY

On July 14, Hermiston celebrated the opening of its new festival street in front of city hall with a ribbon-cutting and bathtub races.

During the month of July the Hermiston city council also began to reconsider its food truck rules, which residents complained were too restrictive. In August the city finally lifted some restrictions, including raising the cap on the number of licenses.

AUGUST

A fire at the entrance of Hat Rock State Park didn't harm any structures, but closed the only road in and out of the park and residen-



A crowd of about 4,400 people watched the Hermiston High School Class of 2018 graduate Thursday, June 8 at the Toyota Center in Kennewick.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

tial area for more than an hour, and burned about 20 acres.

Port of Morrow manager Gary Neal retired after nearly 30 years at the helm, and was succeeded by his son, Ryan, who was previously the port's warehousing manager. The port board interviewed several candidates, and held a public meet-and-greet with four, before selecting the younger Neal.

August brought the Umatilla County Fair, and it was an especially memorable one for those who witnessed one lamb at the youth auction bring in more than \$23,300 for Maddy Thomas, an 11-year-old 4-H student with a brain tumor.

After a year on military leave, Hermiston Superintendent Fred Maiocco submitted his resignation on the first day of school, citing extended military duties that would keep him away longer than expected. The board unanimously selected interim superintendent Tricia Mooney to assume the permanent role. Mooney had previously served as the district's Human Resources

director, and was the interim school chief for a year.

Hermiston High School officially joined the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association in fall 2018, joining a larger and more competitive league, and cutting down on travel time for sports teams.

More than a year after he was charged with the death of James Cragun, Hermiston resident Tyree Houf-muse was cleared of murder charges, and sentenced to a few months in jail for felon in possession of a firearm. In a string of pre-trial hearings, Houf-muse claimed self-defense, and while the entry point of the bullet into Cragun's body made it impossible for the incident to have happened as Houf-muse claimed, his DNA was not found on the gun, and prosecutors had insufficient evidence to convict him.

Echo School's newly remodeled building was unveiled as a spot for all community members to use and enjoy. The new facility, which included a gymnasium, classrooms, art room and woodshop, also featured a public workout room and

gathering space that any city resident could use, and was the result of \$8 million of bond money and state grants.

SEPTEMBER

Hermiston's new senior center, known as the Harkenrider Senior Activity Center, opened in front of an eager crowd on Sept. 8. The 7,000-square foot center, named for late Hermiston mayor and the city's biggest fan, Frank Harkenrider, boasts gathering areas, a deck, a gas fireplace and a commercial kitchen.

Hermiston School District was sued for \$38.9 million by a family who said their son suffered multiple head injuries while on the junior varsity football team, and cited the inaction of district and athletics staff to ensure proper follow-ups. Todd and Dawna Martin filed a lawsuit on behalf of their son Connor, stating that he was allowed to return to the field after a concussion, and that staff did not inform them, nor direct him to see a doctor. They cited bodily injury, medical costs and emotional distress. As of December 2018, the case has

been moved to federal court.

OCTOBER

An expansion of EOTEC got underway on Oct. 8 when the Hermiston city council hired Knerr Construction to begin design work on new offices for the fair and an upgrade of the RV park.

On Oct. 16 Columbia Court Club owner Steve Watkinds announced he had sold the property after a fire led to two years of fighting to re-open what had been the only building in Hermiston with an indoor pool. The new owners haven't yet announced themselves or their plans for the property.

Pendleton Grain Growers put 122 acres of industrial land in Hermiston up for sale in October, suggesting the property across from Hinkle Rail Yard could be the future home of a large shipping operation.

NOVEMBER

The general election on Nov. 6 brought a resolution to campaigns that had run throughout the year. Lori Davis successfully defended her council seat against

Mark Gomolski and county commissioner George Murdock beat challenger Rick Pullen.

Hermiston drivers had to get used to two new traffic signals on 11th Street, at Elm Avenue and Orchard Avenue.

The Hermiston Warming Station opened on Nov. 19 after a last-minute surge of volunteers. The nonprofit emergency shelter had been planning to delay opening after a volunteer shortage.

Portland State University's annual population report, released in November, announced Hermiston had passed the 18,000 population mark.

DECEMBER

An improved Insurance Services Office rating for Umatilla County Fire District announced in December should mean lower home and business insurance premiums in Hermiston and Stanfield.

The Port of Morrow continues to grow, netting a \$19 million federal grant, which they will use to make upgrades to the rail system. The grant will allow for expanded rail-to-barge loading at several marine terminals at the port.

On Dec. 11, Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce president Debbie Pedro announced she was stepping down after 18 years to pursue a new career opportunity.

After dealing with the closure of Interstate 82's Oregon-bound bridge throughout 2018, moving all traffic across the river to a single two-lane bridge, residents found out in December that construction on the bridge has fallen behind, delaying completion to sometime in the spring or summer of 2019.

Hermiston residents also waited all year for the opening of retailer Ranch & Home, which had originally been set to open in December 2017, but the store remained closed through the end of 2018.

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