

**EASTER**

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tos with the Easter bunny. There is a suggested donation of \$5 for pictures, which helps with purchasing specialized equipment for the Boardman Rural Fire Protection District. The egg hunt starts at 10:30 a.m. and features thousands of eggs hidden in the park. (541-481-3014).

**ECHO Community Easter Egg Hunts**

•Downtown Echo  
•Saturday, 9 a.m.  
The Echo Community Church and Echo Volunteer Fire Department are teaming up to organize Easter egg hunts. The hunts are divided up by age groups with infants through age 4 at the church, 21 N. Bonanza; ages 5-7 at George Park, North Dupont Street; and ages 8-12 on the Echo High School football field, 600 Gerone St. (541-376-8108)

**IRRIGON**

**Irrigon Marina Park**  
•430 Eighth St. N.E.  
•Saturday, 11 a.m.

The Community Easter EGGstravaganza offers fun for infants and children through fifth grade. (541-922-3054)

**STANFIELD**

**Coe Park**  
•West Coe Avenue  
•Saturday, 10 a.m.

Kids up to age 12 are invited to a community Easter egg hunt. Coordinated by Stanfield Moose Lodge #920, the event features lots of eggs and some special prizes. Volunteer opportunities are still available. (541-449-3304)

**UMATILLA**

**Nugent Park**  
•725 Eighth St.  
•Friday, 8 p.m.

A Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt will offer kids ages 12-and-under a chance to search in the dark. Be sure to bring a flashlight and an Easter basket. (541-922-3226).



With flashlights in hand, children scatter in the darkness to find Easter eggs. Flashlight Easter Egg Hunts are planned Friday in Hermiston and Umatilla.

File photo

# Umatilla County looks to stay afloat in next budget

By PHIL WRIGHT  
STAFF WRITER

Umatilla County officials anticipate a 3.2% bump in value in the coming fiscal year, but don't expect to see new programs.

The county's 2018-19 budget totaled \$78.7 million and runs out June 30. County Commissioner George Murdock said preparing the budget means dealing with the "bow wave" of annual increases for personnel, services and pensions. The Public Employee Retirement System alone, he said, cost the county about \$1 million a year.

The increase in the valuation is not enough for the county to add any programs, he said, but will keep the county's head above water.

"That's a good thing," he said. "A lot of counties would love to be in our position."

One chunk of change will come from the Stra-

tegic Investment Program deal the county has with Vadata, Inc., big data centers that are part of Amazon.

The program gives Vadata a 15-year break on property taxes as an incentive to build. The county gets to tax the first \$25 million in real market value of the project, and Vadata pays a community service fee of \$500,000 per year. Taxing districts divvy up the revenues.

County assessor Paul Chalmers said his office won't know for a few months just how much money the increase in value will bring. He said the state handles that assessment and provides the figures to the county in late summer.

The county also continues to seek state funds for two major capital improvement projects: \$550,000 for security enhancements to the front of the courthouse and \$1.6 million to renovate the jail to accommodate inmates suffering

from a mental health or drug addiction crisis.

Outside of that, Murdock said, the county is maintaining the buildings it has and does not see a need for new construction. The county last spring paid off the debt on the Stafford Hansell Government Building in Hermiston and has no outstanding bond debt.

The county starts budget work in October. Murdock said that lead time helps to get a good sense of what the fiscal scene looks like. But the ongoing work of the county's Charter Review Committee could play some role in budget preparations. The committee continues to meet and could decide to recommend a new leadership structure, such as a full-time county manager and part-time commissioners.

Until then, the steps in the process are the public budget hearings April 24 and 25 at the courthouse in Pendleton.



Construction is underway for Hermiston Family Housing, a new 48-unit apartment complex on Southeast Sixth Street across from the Cottonwood Apartments in Hermiston.

Staff photo by Jade McDowell/East Oregonian

**APARTMENTS**

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In order to make the Hermiston Family Housing complex pencil out, NHA is building the project in conjunction with a new complex in Portland to create greater economies of scale and open up better financing options for the Hermiston project. Both projects are being designed and built by MWA Architects and Walsh Construction.

"Northwest Housing Alternatives is thrilled to pilot this innovative proj-

ect that will allow rural communities to access new funding models by pairing it with an urban project for scale," NHA executive director Trell Anderson said in a statement. "We hope this effort will pave the way for more projects like this that are desperately needed in Oregon's rural communities."

According to an NHA news release, funding for the Portland and Hermiston projects came from Oregon Housing and Community Service's LIFT program and the Multifamily Energy Pro-

gram, Metro's Transit Oriented Development Program, and private funding from Chase Bank and Raymond James Tax Credits Funds.

Northwest Housing Alternatives already owns and operates the Cottonwood Apartments in Hermiston, located adjacent to the construction site. The nonprofit, which works to increase affordable housing options around the state, will have the managers of Cottonwood manage the Hermiston Family Housing project once they open.

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