



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Airport Road resident Chris Waine is gathering signatures for a petition to hold a public hearing to discuss Umatilla County's plan to redesign Airport Road.

EOTEC neighbor disputes plans for East Airport Road

By PHIL WRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

Chris Waine has run the measurements again and again and again with the same results each time.

If Umatilla County rebuilds East Airport Road in Hermiston to a width of 66 feet at the intersection of Ott Road, he stands to lose at least 13 feet of what he has always been told is his 2-acre property along the Airport Road's south edge.

Perhaps as many as 10 more people with frontage property down the mile length of road would lose out as well.

"I can't see how it's going to cost our neighborhood any less than \$100,000," Waine said.

Airport Road is the primary feeder to the Eastern Oregon Event and Trade Center, which is where the county held a public meeting at the end of March to tell the property owners about the \$1.2 million project to add a third lane to the road that connects to Highway 395 on the west end and Ott Road on the east.

The project also would continue improvements north on Ott, depending on costs. The county hired the engineering firm Anderson Perry & Associates to design the road and oversee the construction.

Anderson Perry showed its designs at the meeting. For those plans to become reality, fences, underground sprinkler systems and fruit trees would have to go to make room for the wider road. Waine said he and one other resident would have to relocate their septic drain fields.

Even the Umatilla Electric Cooperative would have to move numerous utility poles.

The problem, he explained, is the property owners for more than 60 years built onto the county's right-of-way. The locals matched their property lines to the "witness corner," but a county sur-

vey in late autumn found the true property lines were 13 feet farther south and 13 feet farther east.

Gary Culp runs his machining business at the intersection of East Airport Road and Highway 395. He said there is no doubt Airport Road needs improvements, and the county's plan could mean it butts against his fence. But he said that's not his real concern.

"I'm for the neighbors," he said. "I'm on the neighbors' side here."

Tom Fellows, the county public works director, said Anderson Perry has yet to finalize the design. Until then, he said, the project is in a holding pattern. He could not even speculate on a timeline.

"If we're talking about if we get into the mid-June time, I think it's pretty unlikely it would happen before the fair this year," Fellows said.

The county fair takes place the first full week of August. County counsel Doug Olsen was even less confident about the construction project launching this year. Once the county gets the design, he said, there's the bidding process and the county board of commissioners has to OK the contractor. He said the construction project is almost certain to start next spring.

Under state law, the county would have to hold a public hearing on the construction of a new road. Airport Road is not new, and Olsen said the county has no plans for another meeting.

So Waine is gathering signatures of Airport Road property owners to petition the county to hold a public meeting to consider vacating the road or least the portions that would affect him and others. He needs at least 60 percent of property owners to sign on, and he said he is just a few names away. Those are proving tough because they don't live there.

Families put down the screens for downtown event

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

From cell phones to televisions, screens can feel like an inescapable part of life, but Hermiston families dodged the temptation for a few hours Thursday night.

A coalition of organizations hosted a celebration of National Screen-Free Week on the city's festival street Thursday. Under a blue sky, parents and children wandered through stations where they could paint, arrange flowers, do yoga, sample healthy foods and more.

Gracie Littrell, 7, has learned the value of screen-free time well. She said she and her mom Jamie Littrell and brother Michael, 3, were downtown to "have some fun and also spend some time outside."

"We always need to play outside," she said. "It keeps our bodies healthy because we get fresh air and sunlight."

Jamie said sometimes it's hard to get the kids away from the family's tablets or video games, but she has been working to teach them about the value of making time for other types of activities as well.

Limiting screen time to a healthy amount is one of the great struggles of modern parenting.

"In the summertime it's easier because they like to play outside, but in the wintertime it's harder," said Misty Gutierrez, who was watching as her children put together a flower arrangement to take home. The booth was sponsored by the Kiwanis Club and run by Sassafras Flowers staff.

Gutierrez said she appreciated that the community hosted a screen-free event each year.

"I like that it's family-friendly, that everyone can come," she said. "I also like that they actually teach the kids things."

Elise Royer, 8, was looking through the free books available from Altrusa Inter-



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Elise Royer, 8, of Hermiston, does yoga with OSU Extension Service staffer Erin Scionti at a celebration of National Screen-Free Week on Thursday in Hermiston.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Celeste Rodriguez, second from left, helps Rodrigo Mohedana, 4, of Umatilla, and his brother, Benito, 10, gets help from Nayeli Ibarra while making flower arrangements.

national. Her mom Melissa Royer said Elise had persuaded the family to come downtown after getting a flyer for the event from school.

Her kids Elise and Logan, she said, are "big readers."

"I have a lot of books," Elise added.

She ended up going with "Matilda" by Roald Dahl, on a recommendation from her dad Casey, who promised to read it to her.

Brian and Jeannie Thomas brought their children — Aurora, 6, Phoenix, 4, and Alphonse, 2 — down-

town for the free bicycle helmets from Good Shepherd

Health Care System. Once they got the helmets, they said, they planned to stick around and participate in some of the other activities.

Angie Treadwell, a founder of the Healthy Families Coalition and chair of the Children's Health Committee, said she helped coordinate the event, but there was a long list of community organizations participating. She said the goal was to remind people to put down the screens and spend some time interacting as a family or as a community.

"We're missing a lot of that," she said. "These days, everyone is behind a screen."

Even at the "screen-free" event, some people automatically pulled out phones to capture photos of the event or post to social media.

The event is part of a larger movement of National Screen-Free Week, held the first week in May. The movement focuses on "entertainment screens" like video games, television and scrolling through social media, not screens used for work or homework.

"Even though it's about turning off screens, Screen-Free Week isn't about going without — it's about what you can get!," screenfree.org states. "An hour once dedicated to YouTube becomes an hour spent outside; ten minutes wiled away on social media turn into ten minutes spent doodling; a movie on a rainy afternoon is replaced by time spent reading, chatting, or playing pretend!"

Many health organizations have warned that children's still-developing brains can suffer ill effects from too much time in front of a screen, and that too much time on social media or watching television can also negatively affect adults' physical and mental health.

Your Family Deserves The **BEST** Technology... Value... TV!...

\$69.99 MONTH for 24 months

Add High Speed Internet **\$14.95**/mo.

190 Channels America's Top 120

CALL TODAY Save 20%! 1-866-373-9175

SERIOUS ILLNESS?

You May Qualify for a Living Benefit Loan

Have you been diagnosed with cancer or another serious medical condition? Do you have at least \$75,000 of life insurance? Through our program you can borrow money from your life insurance and receive up to 50% of your policy's death benefit today.

Call today to see if you qualify. **1-855-284-5304**

life credit company

EARTHLINK INTERNET

HIGH SPEED INTERNET

Enjoy big-time internet speeds without spending big bucks!

Get Connected for as low as **14.95/mo.** CONTACT YOUR LOCAL AUTHORIZED RETAILER

HyperLink™ High-Speed Internet **\$49.99/mo.**

Satellite Internet **855-977-9436**

Hermiston THE Herald

Now has PRICES you can afford for the LOCAL NEWS YOU NEED



UNLIMITED ACCESS TO THE HERMISTON HERALD NEWS - IN REAL TIME

We're your source for comprehensive coverage of community news, local trends and area events, from weekend fun to photo galleries featuring your neighbors and friends.

24/7 ONLINE ACCESS ON YOUR PHONE, PC OR AT HOME.

Digital Day Pass
Single day access to the newspaper website and all articles. Full day pass includes access for 24 hours. **\$0.99 PER DAY**

Digital + e-Edition
Unlimited access to e-Editions, a PDF version of the newspaper. Unlimited articles and complete access to the Hermiston Herald's content 24/7. • Breaking news • Weather • Manage your account 24 hours a day. **\$39.00 PER YEAR**

Full Access
Convenient home delivery of the Hermiston Herald each week. Unlimited access to e-Edition, website, and \$100s of a year in money saving coupons. Local, regional, national and world news plus the latest word in sports, politics, business, arts and entertainment. **\$49.00 PER YEAR**

Special Sections: • Screen Time • Marketplace • Parent magazine • Real Estate



CALL



ONLINE



STOP BY

CALL TO PAY: Phone: 1-800-781-3214
COMING IN TO PAY: Address: 333 E Main St, Hermiston, OR 97838 • Hours: 10:00AM - 5:00PM
LINK TO PAGE: <https://www.hermistonherald.com/subscribe-now/>