



A car drives on East Airport Road on Friday near EOTEC.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Umatilla County seeks to reduce road project snags

By PHIL WRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

After Airport Road neighbors voiced concerns about improvements to the road planned by Umatilla County, the county aims to hold private, individual meetings with approximately 20 property owners to find ways to mitigate the effects of improvements along the Hermiston road.

The property owners, however, will have to request those meetings.

Owners along the road leading to the front entrance of the Eastern Oregon Event and Trade Center have been building in the public right-of-way for decades. The county surveyed the area last year for the upcoming project to widen Airport Road and build other improvements and found owners and residents have built as much as 13 feet onto county property.

Commissioner George Murdock, chair of the county board, said the situation is common throughout the county, with some folks even farming on public right-of-ways. Most people understand the risks that come with building on property they don't own, he said, and property owners along Airport Road likely will have to deal with some effects of the road project.

The county board of commissioners in this case will vote Wednesday morning in Pendleton to approve a plan for a commissioner, a representative of the county road department, an engineer and "others deemed necessary" to meet with individual property owners

adjacent to Airport Road to discuss those effects and possible solutions.

Chris Waine is one of the Airport Road residents. He also is founder and frontman for the Hermiston Airport Road Neighborhood Association, which is pushing the county to hold a public hearing on the road improvement project. Waine questioned why the county would want to conduct individual meetings.

"They know there is a boundary issue, they know there is a dispute," he said. "Just hold the hearing and hear what the community has to say."

While that might be easier, Murdock said, it may not be better. "Everyone in the room jumping up and down" during a hearing would not allow the county to tailor possible resolutions to meet individual needs, which could range from relocating fences to granting easements for items encroaching on the right-of-way.

"There isn't a great solution," Murdock said, "We have to look at each individual property, and I think when this is all said and done, these individuals won't be as impacted as some people are projecting."

The private meetings also could allow for more candid discussions, and Murdock said as a property owner he would feel more comfortable standing on his own land talking with a few officials than standing in a room full of people and addressing the county board.

If the board approves the plan, the individuals have to ask for the meetings,

and the sessions will not produce meeting minutes. Murdock said any deal that comes out of the meetings, however, would be public.

The county has no legal requirement to hold a public hearing for the road project. Waine said he has talked with the office of Republican state Rep. Greg Smith, Heppner, to change that.

When there are controversies over development and the lay of the land, he said, Oregon law should require public hearings.

Waine contended the county's proposal looks like a formality. He said he plans to attend the Wednesday meeting on behalf of his neighbors and suggest the board table the topic. He said the solution is simple enough: the county commissioner could vote to vacate 13 feet of the southern boundary right-of-way.

MEETING

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners during its meeting Wednesday will consider a plan to hold private meetings with Airport Road property owners to discuss upcoming road improvements. The meeting starts at 9 a.m. and is room 130 of the county courthouse, 216 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton.

The board also will consider an agreement to outsource fleet management and to purchase reader boards for the public works department.

Detective encourages parents to monitor teens' smartphone use

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

A smartphone in every pocket has made it harder than ever to keep teens out of trouble.

Umatilla County Sheriff's Office Det. Kasey Ward said a combination of monitoring and education by parents is crucial to preventing the kind of cases he sees, ranging from date rape to child pornography charges related to sexting.

He described teenagers sending nude photos and sexually explicit messages as an "epidemic."

"It's become common," he said. "They have the mindset of 'everybody does it now.'"

The consequences can be grave, however. The "cute boy" on the other end of the social media app could actually be a "50-year-old pervert," Ward said, who could use the photos to blackmail the teen into worse things, or post the pictures on a child pornography site. He said when he checks a national database to find the victims of images pulled from locals' phones, sometimes he finds the photos are up to a decade old and still circulating.

"Once you put it out there, once you hit send, there's no taking it back, and God only knows where it will end up," he said.

Even if teens are trading sexually explicit photos with someone who is known to them, Ward said there are plenty of teenage boys who delight in showing private nude photos of their girlfriend to their friends. He said teens often think they're safe sending photos over apps such as Snapchat, which ostensibly deletes the photo after a few seconds, but it doesn't prevent people from taking a screenshot.

At best, Ward said, such an incident can result in a

loss of reputation. At worst, the photos could be used as blackmail after a breakup or could cause multiple teens to end up as registered sex offenders for life.

"If a girl sends a sexually explicit photo to a boy, she just manufactured child pornography, he just received it and if he sends it to his friends he distributed it," Ward said.

"If a girl sends a sexually explicit photo to a boy, she just manufactured child pornography"

Det. Kasey Ward,
Umatilla County
Sheriff's Office

He said any minor with a smartphone or other internet-connected device should password protect it in case it gets lost or stolen, but parents should "absolutely" have the password and make it a practice of asking their child to hand over their phone for random searches.

It's important to open every app, Ward said, as photos can be hidden under icons that look like a calculator or other unassuming app. And the child should know that if they're caught deleting messages or their browsing history their phone will be confiscated.

If parents have a suspicion that something illegal is going on, they can sign a release for the sheriff's office to search the phone using a device that pulls everything — including deleted photos and messages — into a format where detectives can easily search for keywords or snapshots of every recent website visit. Ward said sometimes parents are very surprised to find out what

type of pornography their young son or daughter was looking at before clearing their browsing history.

There are parental-control options on the market that can notify parents of their child's web activity or block certain sites. Ward said those can be helpful, but they're not fool-proof. Teens today are incredibly tech-savvy and they all have friends with web-connected devices at school.

"Kids get curious about sex and the opposite sex and now they have a device in their hand where they can look things up privately," he said. "When I was a kid you had to have a friend with a dad who had a Playboy magazine."

That's why it's important that parents have conversations with their children, Ward said, about what they might find online and how someone might take advantage of them there. Ward also encourages parents to have conversations with their children about topics such as consent and the dangers of drinking to the point of blacking out at a party. Teens tend to think of rape as something that happens "with a stranger grabbing you in the parking lot," but the vast majority of sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone known to the victim.

Ward has seen many local cases where the perpetrator (and often their parents) don't think what they did was rape or assault, because the victim was not actively fighting back. A boy might have had sex with a half-unconscious, intoxicated girl at a party or offered a girl a ride home, only to take her somewhere deserted and refuse to take her back until she agreed to have sex with him.

"Teens often have no idea how the laws work and what applies to them," he said.

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Stanfield city manager leaving for new city after six years

By HERMISTON HERALD

Stanfield city manager Blair Larsen announced he is leaving for a position in another city.

The Stanfield city council was planning a special meeting Tuesday night after deadline to approve a plan for recruitment of a new administrator and an advertisement for the position. The proposed schedule would see finalists interviewed on July 19.

A draft advertisement for the position included

in the agenda packet lists the salary at \$65,000 to \$80,000 plus benefits to manage a staff of 21 employees and an annual budget of about \$3.7 million. Stanfield has a population of 2,185.

Larsen has served as Stanfield's city manager since May 2013. He has overseen growth in housing and new business, but also controversy over alleged misconduct in the police department and the odor coming from the 3D IdaPro dehydration plant.

He said Friday that he



Blair Larsen Stanfield City Manager

was not ready to announce his new job yet but should be soon.