



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Lots off the unpaved portion of West Elm Avenue were annexed into the city of Hermiston for the purpose of building a new 39-home subdivision.

City council approves annexation of land for planned subdivision

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The Hermiston City Council approved annexation of 9.35 acres of property off Elm Avenue for a planned subdivision on May 28.

The subdivision, at 1290 W. Elm Ave. across from the Oxbow Trail entrance, would have an estimated 39 single-family dwellings, according to the annexation application submitted to the city.

Developer Dean Maldonado, of FDM Development, told the city's planning commission the homes would likely sell at \$275,000 to \$350,000.

City planner Clint Spencer told city councilors that the planning commission hearing on the subject had drawn some opposition from neighbors concerned about the fact that the property is zoned R-4, allowing for denser, multi-family

development. They voiced concerns about traffic and crowding.

In response to the testimony at that meeting, Spencer said, Maldonado said he had no interest in adding multi-family dwellings to the site. He offered to voluntarily enter into a binding development agreement with the city to only develop single-family homes on lots of at least 8,000 square feet — developing to an R-1 standard but saving the time and expense it would take to go through a rezoning process to change the comprehensive plan.

Spencer said the development agreement made the planning commission comfortable with recommending that the city approve the annexation. The development will still have to go through the platting process and other approvals before being built.

He said water and sewer are available to be extended

to the development, and the developer would be required to pave the unpaved section of West Elm Avenue and add sidewalks, curbs and gutters. He said the new traffic signal at that intersection will help "a lot" with traffic flow.

Mayor David Drotzmann asked about another letter of opposition, sent by owners of a nearby property for sale, who stated there was already "ample" property available nearby for that use. Spencer said the property in question was zoned for commercial use, not residential.

The property for the new subdivision sits behind Lifetime Vision Source, owned by the mayor. The mayor only votes on city ordinances in the event of a tie, and last week's vote was unanimous.

The proposed subdivision off of Elm is one of several housing projects proposed or started in the city recently. Last month the council annexed land off

Theater Lane into the city for a proposed 53-lot subdivision, and construction has started on a 43-unit apartment complex on Southeast Sixth Street.

"Hopefully this all comes to fruition, because we need it," Drotzmann said.

On May 28 the council also approved renewing the city's contract with Kayak Public Transit, which runs the city's free public bus system. The city started the HART in January 2017.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the agreement for 2019-21 is the same as the HART's first two years — the city pays Kayak \$125,000 a year to run the entire operation.

He said ridership was at about 5,000 rides in 2018, but is on track to reach over 8,000 in 2019. The bus system has expanded its hours and now runs from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, making 10 loops per day through the city.

Community looking for ways to support former railroad employees

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The shock of last week's announcement that Union Pacific Railroad would be laying off nearly 200 employees in Hermiston may still be wearing off, but area organizations are looking at what they can do to help those facing unemployment.

Saturday, May 25, was the final day of work for most employees at the Hinkle Rail Yard.

Oregon laws require large employers conducting a "mass layoff" of 50-plus employees or at least 33 percent of their workforce to post notice of the event, triggering assistance for the newly unemployed workers. CAPECO of Pendleton is Umatilla County's "rapid response" agency in such situations.

The nonprofit is holding an event on Tuesday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the Hermiston Community Center, 415 S. Highway 395, to provide furloughed UP employees with information about what resources will be available to them.

The Hermiston City Council, Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce, Oregon Employment Department and CAPECO are also planning to partner on a job fair on June 10. The job fair will take place from 2-7 p.m. at the Hermiston Community Center.

City manager Byron

Smith told city councilors during their May 28 meeting that the idea was to have potential employers from the area on hand to discuss job and training opportunities with anyone looking for a employment.

"We anticipate opening it up to everyone, but it will specifically target (former UP employees)," he said.

Councilors expressed concern for the impact the situation was having on families.

Some of the area's larger employers who struggle to stay fully staffed have already been taking advantage of the surge in interest by advertising openings at places such as Two Rivers Correctional Institution. The Port of Morrow created a flier showing 62 different job openings at port businesses.

Not all jobs are created equal when it comes to pay and benefits, however.

A flyer being passed around Pendleton recently raised eyebrows, as it advertised a Union Pacific event June 7 to "hear how you can build a future with Union Pacific Railroad."

Tim McMahan, UP spokesman, said the event was for tribal members in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and is "an outreach effort that discusses career paths and best practices for those seeking career opportunities."

Umatilla County Fair Board chair pleads guilty to elk poaching

Gay Newman, chair of the Umatilla County Fair Board, pleaded guilty to poaching an elk.

Oregon State Police game troopers in November 2018 responded to a complaint about hunters trespassing and killing a five-point bull elk on private property off Gurdane Road, Morrow County. Troopers found Newman, of Hermiston, shot two elk and validated his wife's second-season spike tag for the five-point. However, according to state

police, that tag was valid for a different hunting unit.

The Morrow County Justice Court, Irrigon, heard the case, according to court records, and Newman in May pleaded guilty to taking a bull elk without a tag. The court fined him \$1,005, gave him a year of bench probation and prohibited him from applying for a hunting license for three years.

The court also ordered police to return Newman's hunting rifle to him.

Hermiston Herald welcomes new reporter

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The *Hermiston Herald* has a new face in its newsroom.

Jessica Pollard started Monday as the paper's newest reporter. She will cover education and public safety on the west side of Umatilla County for both the *Hermiston Herald* and *East Oregonian*.



Pollard

Pollard recently finished up a bachelor's degree in geography from Portland State University and said she is looking forward to getting to know the rest of Oregon and experiencing life in a more rural area.

"I'm really excited for the change of pace," she said.

She said she already appreciates the difference between Hermiston traffic and Portland traffic.

While at PSU Pollard wrote for several school publications, including acting as managing editor of the *Pacific Sentinel*, and completed an internship for the *Willamette Week*. She said she has wanted to be a reporter since the fifth grade, based on her love of talking to people and writing.

"Now it's much more about getting information to people so they can make good decisions," she said.

In her spare time she enjoys writing poetry, hiking and biking. She hopes to learn to play the guitar this year, and said she is looking forward to exploring the

Blue Mountains and high desert scenery.

At the *Herald*, she looks forward to getting to know the school system and the area's law enforcement and fire districts.

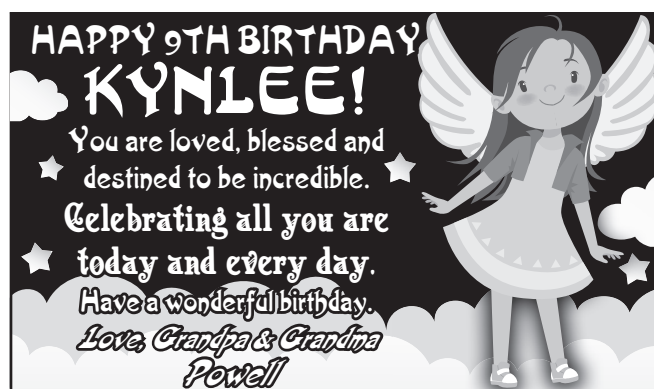
"I'm really excited to highlight the voices of students and teachers, and do some broader stories," she said.

Hermiston Herald edi-

tor Jade McDowell was pleased to see Pollard jump right into the deep end on her first day and start setting up interviews for stories.

"Jessica is very motivated and enthusiastic, and I'm looking forward to the fresh energy she will bring to our newsroom," she said.

Pollard can be reached at jpollard@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4534.



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August 5 Cosmo's Dream Bluegrass	August 12 Cale Moon Country

Music in the Parks is funded by:
Morrow County Unified Recreation District and Portland General Electric
and is sponsored by North Morrow Community Foundation

In the event of inclement weather, Boardman performances will be held at the SAGE Center and Irrigon performances will be held at the Irrigon Senior Center.