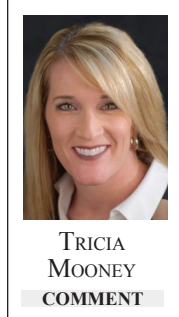


Hermiston schools are full of potential

Every school year in Hermiston begins with the promise of new opportunities for our students and staff. New friendships are formed, new experiences pursued, and we set out to learn new ways to succeed together.



TRICIA MOONEY COMMENT

It's the Hermiston way. We're an inviting and inclusive community that believes in teamwork and cooperation. We're at our best when we're learning from one another, and our willingness to welcome everyone to the table has spurred extraordinary growth.

The school district benefits greatly from this culture as we get the opportunity to educate and mentor the thousands of students who walk through our doors each day. But this growth also creates the challenge of finding adequate space for everyone.

These are good problems for our community and our schools, but are problems nonetheless. Schools with overcrowded classrooms and congested campuses hinder the learning process, and as a district we're always looking for ways to remove those obstacles.

When addressing these kinds of issues, the school district and board starts with a simple question: What is best for our students?

Studies show an elementary school is at its most effective with an enrollment of 600 or less. It creates a stronger sense of community, and the gymnasium, cafeteria and other communal spaces can be shared equitably. Our elementary schools



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Rocky Heights Elementary School would be replaced with a new, larger school on the same property if a school bond is approved by voters in November.

are either right at or beyond that critical enrollment level now, and we're feeling the strain. Each year we see an additional 50 students or more, and we know that pressure will only increase.

At the high school we need the capacity to provide not only traditional educational offerings but cutting-edge career and technical training. We simply don't have the space in our current buildings to do that and have relied on modular classrooms as a short-term solution. But while making payments out of our general fund to cover their lease makes sense for short-term capacity demands, it doesn't uphold our responsibility to wisely use taxpayer dollars long-term.

With those realities in mind, we moved on to the next question: How can we add classroom space while best serving the interests of the community and taxpayers?

We listened after voters rejected the previous school bond in 2017, and with the help of a citizens' facility committee created a plan that will address our capacity needs while keeping the tax rate stable. We've also narrowed the scope of the bond to meet the requests of the community.

Financially, we've aggressively budgeted to pay off all pre-2008 bond debt so taxpayers will see a bill about \$0.40 per \$1,000 assessed value lower this fall. It's our intention that this bond won't affect

that rate but will generate its revenue from the city's growing tax base. We have had these numbers evaluated and certified by Piper Jaffray.

We've also removed some items from the previous bond. We are no longer asking to demolish and rebuild a larger Highland Hills Elementary, but instead would use the opportunity to redraw district boundaries and make the school's enrollment fit its intended use. And we won't use any portion of the bond on deferred maintenance — we've worked with each department to find savings to pay for all maintenance costs out of the general fund.

The final package includes two new elementary schools (one to replace Rocky Heights with a 600-student school and a new 600-student school on the district's Theater Lane property), a large multi-classroom annex at the high school, minor site improvements at elementary schools to decrease congestion, and the purchase of additional property for future development. There is also a mandate in Measure 30-130 that the district will form a citizen review panel to make sure funds are spent only on intended purposes. And as a bonus, if local voters approve the bond, the state will supply a \$6.6 million matching grant.

The Hermiston School District believes in being a good partner. Our role is not just providing superb education for our students, but also creating a desirable workplace for our teachers and staff and a stronger community through state-of-the-art facilities, athletic fields and campus grounds. Hermiston is a great place to live, work, and raise a family, and we're glad to be a part of it.

Tricia Mooney is the superintendent of the Hermiston School District.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Schools are the heart of the community

Schools are the heart of our community. We take a great deal of pride in our schools. They're well-maintained, well-staffed and readily available for the public use. They're the foundation Hermiston has been built on.

Now we have the opportunity to expand that foundation by approving the construction of two new elementary schools and a high school annex.

This will allow the schools to function how they're supposed to — with right-sized classrooms and enough space for rapidly growing student enrollment.

A new elementary school on Theater Lane and a larger Rocky Heights will alleviate the pressure on the other four elementary schools, and the extra classroom space at the high school will give our students the classroom space they need without building a second high school.

Join me in supporting our Hermiston schools and approving Measure 30-130 in November.

Josh Goller
Hermiston

Community should be prepared for growth

Hermiston is an amazing place to live, and it's obvious the secret is out.

We live at the crossroads of the Pacific Northwest, a short drive to the Blue Mountains or Columbia River, with land perfect for growing crops of all kinds and there are friendly faces everywhere you turn. Businesses continue to open here, bringing family wage jobs and growing the workforce.

We value this growth and owe it to ourselves to be prepared for the families that come with it. The Hermiston School District plays a big role in making the community an attractive place to live and has created a bond package that matches the pace of growth we're experiencing.

It's fitting that the bond will be funded

in large part by local growth in the coming years. The expanding tax base will help pay off the debt over the life of the bond.

New schools will also increase the home values in nearby neighborhoods and spur further development. A strong school district leads to a more attractive city.

We've got a good thing going in Hermiston, and through the support of our community the school district will continue to be a gem that makes this a prime place to raise a family.

Join me in voting YES for Hermiston Schools this November.
David Drozmann
Hermiston

Build Hermiston schools to last

In 1957 I came to Hermiston to teach science at Hermiston Junior High. Having lived in western Oregon I wanted to get away from the rain. I planned to stay two years. But, realizing how dedicated patrons were to their schools and how appreciative they were of teachers, I stayed.

At the time I signed my contract I did not know Hermiston was the poorest school district in the state. Because of this, Hermiston barely had enough funding for operating expenses. Construction of new schools was done with the minimum standards permitted at the time. — completely unacceptable by today's standards. They all leaked. Safety was limited to getting the children quickly out of the building in the event of a fire. Unfortunately they were not built to last.

Now that our tax base is near the state average, it should be expected that our schools be built to standards that will be acceptable for generations to come. There is an expression, "build it and they will come." I have heard newcomers say they moved here because of the quality of our schools.

Our good reputation will continue if you vote yes for the school bond.
Carlisle Harrison
Hermiston

SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor is a forum for local Hermiston Herald readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters should be kept to 250 words. Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

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JEREMY PECK, MD

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