

Toy run

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The generosity of the bikers lasts well beyond the holiday season. In addition to providing gifts to kids in the hospital during Christmas, toys are available for staff to give to children who might benefit from having their spirits lifted throughout the year. Also, Sanders said they share some with the Hermiston Police Department's Christmas Express program and other needy children in the community.

As word of Sells' passing spread throughout the biker community, people were already talking about carrying on the tradition he started with the help of former owners of the old Echo Saloon. Daughters Amanda Silvani of Umatilla and Tia Barden of Arlington, Washington, were overwhelmed with the interest in continuing the annual holiday season toy run. Less than a week after their father's death, plans were starting to gel for this year's event.

"It's been really easy because a lot of the motorcycle groups want to see



Amanda Silvani, fourth from left, visits with bikers who attended a celebration of life gathering in August for her father, Al Sells. The 16th annual Echo Toy Run is being held in memory of the Stanfield man.

it continue," Silvani said. "Everyone says, 'Let's keep this going in his memory.'"

Barden emphasized that her father's legacy goes beyond just the Echo Toy Run. It's her hope that people will continue to give

back to their communities in a variety of ways. Charitable efforts of the biker community, she said, are often overlooked.

"It's a different perspective of what most people think about people who ride

a Harley and wear leathers," Barden said. "His giving back was amazing."

Sanders agreed, saying people might have viewed Sells as a little rough around the edges. However, he was quick to point out that Sells



HH file photo

Participants in sixth annual Echo Toy Run place toys in bins in the parking lot at Good Shepherd Medical Center. In its 16th year, the Dec. 7 event will be held in memory of longtime organizer Al Sells, who died earlier this year in a motorcycle crash.

and the other bikers who regularly participated in the toy run have hearts of gold.

"Our community is a better place because of Al Sells and the influence he had on so many," Sanders said. "Al was a genuine man who made a difference in our community. I'm pleased that the toy run can continue in his name."

The 16th annual Echo Toy Run is Saturday, Dec. 7. It will depart at noon from Main Street, Echo. Bikers will lead the way with cars

and trucks following as they deliver new unwrapped toys to Good Shepherd. Hospital employees will greet the group when they arrive and offer coffee, hot chocolate and pastries. Afterwards, participants are invited to gather at the "Fallen Biker Bench" at the Hermiston Cemetery.

For more information, call/text Silvani at 541-720-9304, contact Sanders at 541-667-3413, ksanders@gshealth.org or search Facebook.

Council

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adequate sewer and water infrastructure ready to serve the site, and that even worst case scenario traffic numbers would fall well within what surrounding roads were designed to handle.

The request for annexation into the city and zoning the land with a mixture of commercial and residential designations was met with no opposition at Monday's public hearing, but it did get a notable endorsement from former city manager Ed Brookshier.

"I first started discussing the concept with Lloyd very casually two or two and a

half years ago, and it excited me from the very beginning," he told the council.

He pointed out that Hermiston's other entrances into town have seen development and beautification over recent years, but its entrance from Highway 207 "lacks character." The Piercys' project, he said, has the opportunity to set the tone for people coming into town from that direction.

He said developing that particular piece of land won't be easy, but he has faith in the their ability to see it through.

"I've watched the Piercys in other work, and their quality and attention to detail is outstanding," he said.

Hermiston resident Eric Reise also said he was

excited about the opportunity for Hermiston and was impressed with what the Piercys had done for Echo.

City councilors asked questions about the proposal, which had been vetted and recommended by the planning commission. Spencer said some questions — such as whether the speed limit would be adjusted along Elm Avenue — were preliminary and would come as the developers continued through the process.

City councilor Rod Hardin noted that the number of senior citizens in the United States is expected to double in the next 10 years, and said that he had recently visited a similar project in another city, where 95% of its 80 senior units and 92% of its

regular family units had been leased.

"I feel there's a demand," he said.

In addition to the 36 acres for the Piercys' project, city staff also worked with Umatilla Electric Cooperative to include the utility's substation on Elm Street in the annexation to avoid creating an "island" of county land in the city.

The zoning and annexation were passed unanimously.

The council started Monday's work session with state Sen. Bill Hansell, who highlighted bills he helped pass during the 2019 legislative session. During the upcoming short session in February, senators are allowed a single bill while representa-

tives are allowed two bills. They sent their bills for legal review on Friday, and Hansell said his bill would call for funding to study critical groundwater issues in the Columbia Basin.

The senator noted that he had decided to run for another four-year term next year, and said it would likely be his last, although he knows to "never say never." He said he had been approached about running for federal office when Congressman Greg Walden recently announced his retirement, but decided against it.

"I think every Republican elected official in the statehouse had someone call them and say, 'You ought to run,'" he said.

During Monday's meeting the council passed several housekeeping items, including minor updates to its found property and animal sections of the code of ordinances, adoption of a formalized written set of standards for the Hermiston Municipal Airport and a supplemental budget to close out several old accounts with small amounts of money left over from past projects.

The council removed an item from its agenda to adopt findings of fact for their land use decision from Nov. 12 that declined to rezone a piece of property on Northeast Fourth Street, which Eastern Oregon Development LLC had hoped to turn into mini-storage.

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