

Oregon Trail advocates disagree with depot proposal

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The programmatic agreement to protect historical assets at the former Umatilla Chemical Depot will be up for public comment in “very short order,” according to Columbia Development Authority director Greg Smith.

Getting the U.S. Army to sign off on the agreement is the final hurdle for the depot to transfer from the Army to local control. Smith told the CDA board on Thursday that the 30-day comment period should begin in roughly two weeks.

Some Oregon Trail advocates have already expressed disapproval. Wendell Baskins of the Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council said he and other advocates sent the Army an alternate proposal for consideration, which would preserve a much larger portion of the Oregon Trail runs running through land the CDA has slated for industrial development.

“I’m presenting a minority report,” he told the board.

The CDA — a partnership of several local governments — negotiated for months with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to come up with the official programmatic agreement submitted to the Army. The agreement to protect or mitigate culturally significant sites must be signed by the Army, the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office.

The CDA’s plan is to preserve the branch of the Oregon Trail that runs through the northern part of the depot as part of the wildlife preserve that will be run by the tribes. For the fork on the southern side, a 200-yard section would be preserved and a parking lot, picnic area, restrooms and educational kiosks would be added to encourage the public to visit and learn about the trail.

Baskins said the Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council’s proposal would be to place kiosks on a small section in a different area of the depot, and then to preserve just shy of a mile of the southern trail.

“We ask that you do not expend money on parking lots, restrooms or a picnic area,” he said. “Protect it by covenant and simply let it be.”

He said there could be an option to bring school children out on scheduled field trips, but not allowing general public access would help with security



Contributed photo

Oregon Trail ruts can be seen on the southern portion of the former Umatilla Chemical Depot.

issues with the trail being so close to National Guard facilities.

Don Russell, chair of the CDA board, said he hasn’t been able to see any visible signs of the trail when he has gone out and looked at it. He questioned why it was so important to save so much of the trail that settlers of European decent walked on, when there probably wasn’t a single portion of the depot that hadn’t been crossed by ancestors of area tribes.

“What makes this piece of history more valuable?” he said.

Board member Kim Puzey said regardless of his personal opinions on trail preservation, port authorities have a legislative mandate to use their land for economic development.

Smith said the CDA had gone “above and beyond” what was expected in planning to preserve as much of the trail ruts as it plans to.

Baskins said he understood the importance of the jobs that major industrial development on the site would bring, but he felt “honor bound” to do what he could to persuade the Army to require more preservation, and to require a binding covenant that would apply to any future owners of the land as well.

During Thursday’s 2-1/2-hour meeting, board members also discussed a variety of other topics in preparation for receiving the depot land after a programmatic agreement is approved. An engineer from Anderson Perry & Associates presented possible road configurations along the industrial part of the depot, which could be paid for using the \$9 million the CDA has been given by the Legislature using funds from the 2017 transportation package.

The money is only available for transportation uses, however. Smith reminded the board that they will need to find alternative sources of funding for water, sewer and elec-

tricity installed under the new roads.

He said they also need to have further discussions on how to develop the water rights and wells that will transfer to the CDA along with the property.

J.R. Cook, of Northeast Oregon Water Association, said he was glad to hear Smith acknowledge the issue was “complicated.” Area farmers didn’t want to stand in the way of the transfer of the depot, he said, but they were concerned about what pulling more groundwater out of the aquifers would do to the depot’s neighbors.

“I do get concerned about paper rights, and people thinking that paper rights mean the water’s there,” he said.

When the CDA receives the depot it will also inherit a large cache of equipment, from tools to construction vehicles.

Smith said unfortunately the Army has just let the vehicles sit for years, so he is not sure how usable they would be, but noted that Umatilla County Fire District 1 had asked for a backhoe, forklift and flatbed trailer for training purposes. The Port of Morrow is also interested in a large generator in exchange for in-kind services to the CDA. And other equipment could possibly be used to set up a career technical education center for area students.

Board member Bill Elferring said he would like a professional to appraise the vehicles and generators before the CDA considers making any deals to give them away — something other board members agreed with and Smith said he would do.

The board wrapped up its meeting with an executive session to discuss real estate negotiations, after which they approved a motion directing Smith to work with the CTUIR and Innergex Renewable Energy on a potential agreement related to the depot.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Developer Tanner Wideriksen, his wife, Sandra Wideriksen, and children Galilea and Ezekiel cut the ribbon for the Cimmaron Terrace townhouse development in Northeast Hermiston on Friday afternoon.

VestCapital breaks ground on second phase of Cimmaron Terrace

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Thirty eight new homes will go up in early 2020 in northeast Hermiston, just in time for a new elementary school to be built across the street.

“The timing was really, really phenomenal,” developer Tanner Wideriksen of VestCapital said.

VestCapital broke ground on a second phase of the Cimmaron Terrace subdivision off East Theater Lane and Eighth Street on Friday. The new development will start with 38 single family homes on separate lots, with another 61 lots graded and available for reservations. The first phase of the project — 78 townhomes — is nearly complete.

Hermiston School District, meanwhile, just passed a bond that will include construction of a new 600-student elementary school on that same stretch of East Theater Lane.

The Cimmaron Terrace developers are also working with the city of Hermiston to create a new 7-acre city park in the vicinity. They have yet



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Galilea Wideriksen, the daughter of Cimmaron Terrace developer Tanner Wideriksen, helps break ground on the Cimmaron Terrace townhome development.

to decide exactly what amenities will be included there, but the city has been looking for an opportunity to add another park to its east side.

Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan said VestCapital, the city of Hermiston, Umatilla County and Hermiston School District have worked together in different aspects of the project, pitching in for water and sewer infrastructure and paving part of Theater Lane, to benefit all involved.

“The entire process has

really been a private-public partnership to a ‘T’ from the start,” he said.

Wideriksen said VestCapital is still deciding on the price point for the new homes, looking to the market to determine that and the timeline on the other 61 homes. According to a news release, the vision for the entire Cimmaron Terrace Planned Unit Development project, approved by the city in 2010, includes 114 single family homes, 229 townhomes, seven multi-family lots and the 7-acre park.

eOMEDIA group
The most valuable and respected source of local news, advertising and information for our communities.
eomediagroup.com

Sampler BOX \$100 (Reg. \$125)
BOX INCLUDES:
• 2 T-Bones Steaks
• 2 Rib Steaks
• 2 New York Steaks
• 2 Top Sirloin
• 1 - 3-4 lb. Boneless Chuck Roast
• 5 - 1 lb. Pkg Extra Lean Ground Beef
541.567.2011
253 W. Hermiston Ave. Hermiston
E.O.M.S. EASTERN OREGON MOBILE SLAUGHTER

During this special time of year encourage your loved ones who have served in the military to make an appointment with their local Veterans Service Representative to review their federal and state benefits. They may be entitled to VA Health care, Compensation, Pension, Education or Home loan benefits.
CALL FOR AN APPOINTMENT TODAY!
541-922-6420 • MORROW COUNTY VETERANS SERVICES

The choice is yours!
CHOOSE FROM OVER 30 DIFFERENT ENTRÉES AND SIDES THIS CHRISTMAS!
Traditions DINING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25
11am-9pm | \$25.95 per person

SAVOR THE SEASON
SPECIAL HOLIDAY MENU FEATURES
DECEMBER 24 AND 25
NOW TAKING RESERVATIONS
541-966-1610
PLATEAU FINE DINING

THE BIGGEST PARTY OF THE DECADE
FREE CONCERT AND PARTY with 70s Disco Band THE Aphrodisiacs
Food and Drink Specials - Free Party Favors
Tuesday, December 31 - Rivers Event Center
Doors Open 8pm | Concert 9pm
CASINO • HOTEL • GOLF • CINEPLEX • RV • MUSEUM • DINING • TRAVEL PLAZA
800.654.9453 • PENDLETON, OR • I-84, EXIT 216, wildhorseresort.com. Owned and operated by CTUIR
Management reserves all rights to alter, suspend or withdraw promotions/offers at any time.
WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO