

# Hermiston Herald

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2020

HermistonHerald.com

\$1.50

## INSIDE

### CLOSURE

Davis Amusement Cascadia closes after years of providing rides for the Umatilla County Fair. **Page » A3**

### MLK DAY

The annual Peace Walk takes place Monday. **Page » A4**

### FOOD TRUCKS

Hermiston's food truck pod will return again next summer. **Page » A10**

## BY THE WAY

### City to host wayfinding open house

The city of Hermiston is hosting an open house next week to discuss a new wayfinding project.

The city plans to add and update signs around town to make it easier for visitors to find their way around Hermiston and discover community attractions.

According to a news release, they have hired **MERJE**, a design firm with "specific expertise in Community Wayfinding," to assist with the project.

Community members can come and listen to a presentation, ask questions and give input on Jan. 22 from 4-6 p.m. at the **Hermiston Community Center**, 415 S Highway 395.

...  
Last April, **Fiesta Foods** closed its doors at the corner of Theater Lane and Highway 395, and **Grocery Outlet** confirmed it would be opening a store at the same address "sometime in 2020." This week we checked back in with Grocery Outlet and they updated their timeline to March 2020. Information about job openings and other updates will be posted to [groceryoutlet.com](http://groceryoutlet.com) as the opening date draws closer.

...  
The annual meeting

See BTW, Page A12

## Repair or replace?



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Hermiston City Hall remains closed due to damage from a fire as the city discusses the possibility of building a new city hall rather than repairing the old one.

### City councilors discuss building a new city hall earlier than expected after fire damaged the building

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
NEWS EDITOR

Hermiston City Hall could remain closed for much longer than previously estimated if the city council decides to replace the building rather than repair it.

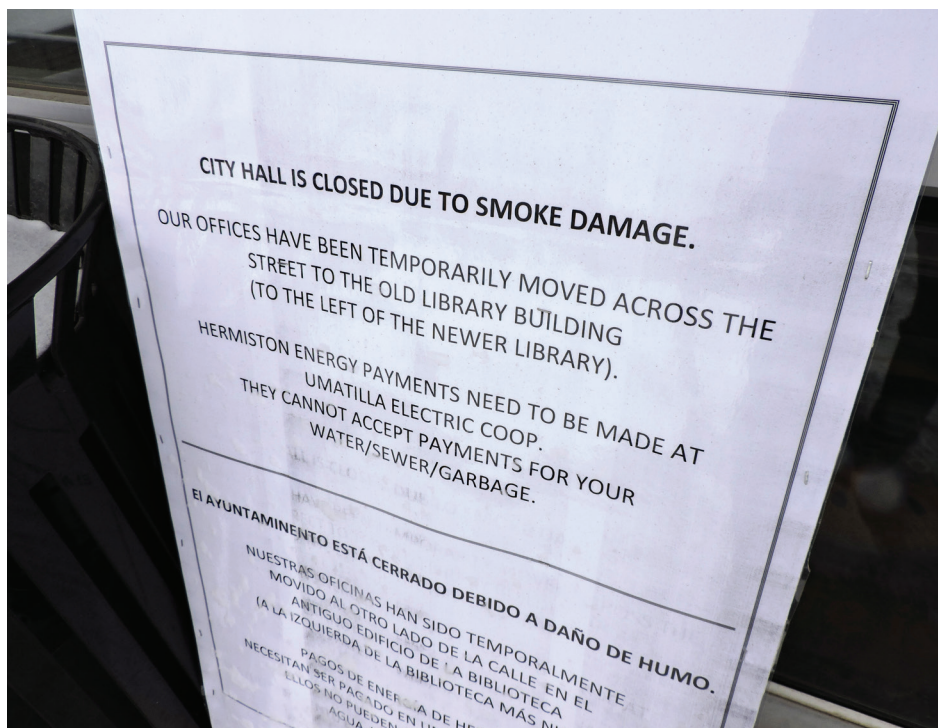
The building, originally built as a bank in 1965, was damaged by a fire in the HVAC system on Dec. 17. City Manager Byron Smith told the council on Monday night that he didn't have all the final quotes in yet, but it would require roughly \$100,000 to replace the damaged HVAC system and pipes buried in concrete, put in new carpet and repaint.

The city council has included construction of a new city hall in its goal-setting sessions in recent years, as the city has run out of room and had to put staff in locations such as the old Carnegie Library and Hermiston Community Center. Smith told the council Monday that it may make sense to push up the timeline.

"It's hard for me to say, 'Let's spend \$100,000 on a building that in two years I'm going to recommend you tear down,'" Smith said.

Smith and several city councilors discussed the limitations of the current city hall, which has rooms spread out over five levels, some of which are not ADA-accessible. That includes the bathrooms, which are located on one of the basement levels, and the council dias.

Mayor David Drotzmann said he believed the inaccessibility of city hall was a barrier to people with disabilities wanting to work for the city or serve on councils or in office.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

A notice on the door of Hermiston City Hall directs residents across the street to conduct city business.

"We put a sign up that says Hermiston is an inclusive community — except for city hall," he said.

While he agreed that Hermiston needs a more accessible city hall, he said he also worried about rushing the decision too much, and asked how long staff could last in their current locations.

Smith said one section of basement in city hall that wasn't connected to the main HVAC system has reopened, while other city staff have been farmed out to locations such as the Carnegie Library

and the offices of Anderson Perry & Associates. It has been crowded and uncomfortable, he said, but they could make it work for a handful of months.

If the city council decided to put whatever insurance payout the city receives toward a new building, Smith said they could remodel the basement of the library — where Monday's city council meeting was held — into city offices and continue to use the Carnegie

See City Hall, Page A12

## Possible community center sale affects EOTEC

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
NEWS EDITOR

A planning commission meeting about a parking variance for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center was briefly sidetracked over a discussion about the possible sale of the Hermiston Community Center, where the commission met on Wednesday night due to the closure of city hall.

Several commission members expressed opposition to the idea of the city selling the center.

City manager Byron Smith confirmed to the *Hermiston Herald* last week that the city is still willing to consider a sale once the potential buyer, who still hasn't been named by the city, finalizes

and submits a proposal.

Commissioners wondered how getting rid of the venue would affect EOTEC in light of EOTEC manager Al Davis' comment that EOTEC's event center was booked "pretty much every weekend" from February through the fair.

"There are not very many options to replace this building," Phil Hamm said.

Margaret Saylor agreed, noting the community center also had amenities EOTEC didn't, such as a stage.

"I just can't conceive of a city only having a facility like EOTEC," she said.

Davis said average attendance

See Center, Page A12



HH file photo

The sun sets over the carnival at the Umatilla County Fair in 2019. The potential sale of the Hermiston Community Center could push more local events onto EOTEC's calendar.

