

## Center:

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for weekend events at EOTEC, which range from fundraisers to quinceañeras, is about 500. He said organizers of smaller events in the 200-300 range didn't like using EOTEC as much because the size of the great hall made the event look empty, but private options such as the Maxwell Event Center couldn't hold crowds that large. He also noted both EOTEC and the community center often hosted events on the same night.

He said his phone started "ringing off the hook" when the *Hermiston Herald* published an article announcing the possibility of a sale of the community center.

"So it's your expert opinion not to get rid of this valuable build-

ing?" commission member Ben Sargent asked Davis.

"It's my expert opinion to stay out of it," Davis responded, drawing chuckles.

In response to a question from the commission, city planner Clint Spencer confirmed that the city would not be able to sell the community center in secret, but would be required by law to hold a vote of the city council in a public meeting, advertised ahead of time, where public testimony would be taken.

The topic came up as the planning commission discussed parking at EOTEC. It was conducting its annual review of the variance that the city obtained from the commission in 2016, promising to meet certain conditions in exchange for not providing as many paved parking spaces as would normally be required by city ordinance

for events with more than 2,000 attendees.

In January 2018, the commission chastised EOTEC — then jointly owned by the city of Hermiston and Umatilla County — for flouting several of the variance's conditions in 2017, including the requirement to only use the Ott Road entrance in case of emergency and to submit various plans and permits before the fair.

In January 2019, the planning commission put a moratorium on new construction at EOTEC because the city had not yet submitted a written parking plan as required by the variance. The decision was a contributing factor to the decision to not build an RV park at EOTEC that had originally been planned for construction in 2019.

On Wednesday, Spencer suggested to the commission that they

extend the deadline for the parking plan out another year, to 2021, because the city had still not submitted one.

Davis said that the city's EOTEC advisory board was still working on an overall strategic plan for the site, and based on the slow progress he thought it could be as long five years before anything else — such as RV park intended to raise revenue for EOTEC or the office and storage space that had been promised to the Umatilla County Fair — was built on the site.

The potential sale of the community center complicated things as well, he said. It had always been a longterm goal of EOTEC to expand the event center eventually, but that expansion might look different depending on whether the city still had a community center.

If it did not, he said, the advisory board might write the plan to

include a separate community center facility on site rather than just adding more rooms onto the end of the event center building.

"It's part of the conversation the advisory board's having, but how do you strategically plan for something that you don't know is going to happen?" he said.

In light of the unfinished strategic and parking plans for EOTEC, the planning commission voted to amend two conditions of the variance.

They added a requirement that shuttles be used for the fair and rodeo week and that event organizers and the city work to determine whether any other events with more than 2,000 attendees needed a shuttle to keep up with parking demand.

They also extended the deadline for the parking plan from 2020 to 2021.

## BTW:

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of the **Oregon Water Coalition** and **Northeast Oregon Water Association** is planned for Tuesday, Jan. 21 beginning at 8:15 a.m. at the **Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center**, 2121 S. First St., Hermiston.

NOWA director **JR Cook** will present a slideshow on water projects that are in the works. Other speakers include **Sen. Bill Hansell**, R-Athena, who will talk about what is coming for the legislative short session; **Tom Byler**, director of **Oregon Water Resources Department**, discussing Oregon's 100-year water vision; **Chris Kowitz** on rules of groundwater wells reporting; and attorney **Steve Shropshire**, who will present on water and legislation.

There is no charge to attend the meeting, which includes breakfast. For more information, contact **Ray Kopacz** or **Tiffany Harrell** at stanfieldid@stanid.com, or call 541-449-3272.

...  
**City Councilor Lori Davis** will represent Hermiston at a national level after being selected to serve on the **National League of Cities Small Cities Council**.

The council represents the interests of cities with fewer than 50,000 residents, and connects leaders of those cities so that they can discuss solutions to common problems they face.

Davis, who has been a city councilor since 2009, grew up in Hermiston and works for **Two Rivers Correctional Institution**.

"I look forward to strengthening Hermiston's ties to America's small cities," she said in a news release. "We are able to share ideas and gain resources to better the lives of Hermiston residents."

...  
The **Hermiston Elks Lodge** is hosting a membership open house. People interested in the organization are encouraged to attend and learn how a commitment of time and skills can make a difference in the community. The event is **Saturday, Jan. 25** from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The lodge is located at 480 E. Main St. Appetizers and beverages will be available. For more information, call **David Downing** at 541-571-1089.

...  
The menu for Thursday at the **Harkenrider Senior Activity Center** is potato soup, crackers, salad and dessert. Friday is chili, cornbread, fruit and dessert. Monday is broccoli soup, sandwich, fruit and dessert. Tuesday is hamburger soup, cornbread, salad and dessert. Next Wednesday is fish sandwich, pea salad, pudding and cookies.

— You can submit items for our weekly *By The Way* column by emailing your tips to editor@hermistonherald.com.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

**The former Carnegie Library and the Hermiston Public Library across from city hall could house city staff for the next two years if the city decides to rebuild city hall rather than repair it.**

## City Hall: Council weighs repair vs. replace

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Library for the building and planning departments until a new building is built at the location of the current city hall.

He said architects had told him they could likely have plans for a new city hall ready this summer if they started soon, and then construction would take an additional 18 months after that.

Councilors said they were not comfortable making a decision on Monday night, without more information and public input, but directed Smith

to return in the next month or so with concrete details about costs, financing, etc.

"This could present an opportunity," councilor Roy Barron said.

### Garbage rates

Councilors approved an increase in garbage rates on Monday night. The rate for a 90-gallon container, which most customers use, will go up \$1.55 to \$18.80 a month starting in February.

Sanitary Disposal Inc., which handles the city's garbage and recycling, requested permission for the rate increase to help cover increases in the

cost of doing business, such as fuel and insurance, and the decreases in revenue from problems with the recycling market. Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said minimum wage in Umatilla County has gone up by 20% since the last rate increase in July 2016.

Residents will also see another increase on their water and sewer bills in March. When the council approved a rate restructure last year, they added a much smaller annual adjustment based on inflation to keep up with rising costs of labor and materials. This year's increase will be 1.8%.

# Hermiston 2019 Festival of Trees

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