

Hermiston Herald

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Neighbors of a proposed subdivision are concerned about the traffic it will bring. **Page » A3**

FLOOD MONEY

A walk-out jeopardizes a proposed \$11 million in flood recovery for Umatilla County. **Page » A12**

DAM LETTER

Gov. Kate Brown supports removal of the Snake River dams. **Page » A13**

BY THE WAY

Tugboat sinks into Columbia

After strong winds sunk a tugboat into the Columbia River a few miles east of Umatilla on Monday, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality said operations are progressing to deal with the impact of the sunken vessel.

Laura Gleim, a spokeswoman for DEQ, said crews have been on scene tending to the vessel and have placed containment booms around the sunken craft in an effort to avoid fuel and oil from spreading into the river.

While environmental agencies are concerned about the 750 gallons of diesel fuel the tugboat is believed to have been carrying, Gleim said that divers' inspections of the tugboat have shown the fuel tanks appear to be undamaged despite a 3-foot gash in the ship's hull.

The 38-foot Tug Nova was built in 1963 and is owned by HME Construction, a marine construction firm based out of Vancouver, Washington, according to the company's website. The vessel will be towed to Vancouver for repairs.

Gleim said there have

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MOVING FORWARD



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Hermiston city manager Byron Smith looks at the furnace of the Hermiston City Hall during a tour of the fire-damaged building Monday night.

Hermiston City Council votes to move forward on new city hall

By JESSICA POLLARD
STAFF WRITER

Two months after a fire damaged the interior of Hermiston's city hall building, city councilors unanimously voted to move forward with the construction of a new city hall building at a meeting on Monday night.

"There's never a good time," said Mayor David Drotzmann shortly before the motion to vote. "It's not a conversation we started two months ago. It's a conversation we had for several years, to figure out how we're going to address the inadequacies of city hall."

City manager Byron Smith previously recommended the council vote to build a new city hall on the same site as the old one and remodel the basement of the library as a temporary office space for city employees in the meantime. The project would be a combined total price of about \$9 million.

He added at the previous city council meeting that a new city hall space would allow for the police department to expand, as municipal court services currently located at the crowded public safety building could be moved to the new city building. He added that the library basement renovation for the temporary city hall would eventually benefit the library, which could turn the more open floor plan

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Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Hermiston Mayor David Drotzmann inspects damage to the furnace at the Hermiston City Hall ahead of Monday night's city council meeting.

MORE INFORMATION

For more from Monday's city council meeting, including an announcement that the city is no longer considering the sale of the Hermiston Community Center, see **Page A3**.

Live Better U provides debt-free degree

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Ashli Palmer's career at Walmart has funded two different college degrees, but the company had a much more direct hand in the most recent one.

Palmer started at Walmart at age 20, working as an overnight stocker in their La Grande store to help pay her way through a bachelor's degree in business from Eastern Oregon University.

Now, more than 15 years later, she is the first Oregonian to graduate through Walmart's Live Better U, which offers Walmart asso-

ciates the opportunity to earn a college degree or other certifications for only \$1 per day.

"I push this program to everyone, because it's designed for people who are working and have lives," she said. "They made it so easy for working professionals, and at such a great cost."

Palmer has done "a little bit of everything" for the company over the years, but currently works as the human resources manager at the Walmart Distribution Center in Hermiston. When Walmart announced Live Better U in 2018, she jumped at the chance to increase her

knowledge by pursuing a bachelor's degree in supply chain, transportation and logistics management.

"It aligns perfectly with what we do here," she said.

Live Better U currently offers about 30 different degrees, as well as certifications such as pharmacy technician, through various institutions, with Walmart picking up most of the tab. In Palmer's case, her degree comes from Bellevue University. She started coursework in October 2018, with new courses every six weeks involving homework, tests,

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Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Ashli Palmer, the human resource manager at the Walmart Distribution Center in Hermiston, recently completed Walmart's Live Better U program, a program that allows Walmart employees to get a college degree for \$1 a day.



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