

# Hermiston Herald

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2020

HermistonHerald.com

\$1.50

**INSIDE**

**ELECTIONS**

See who is on the ballot for the May primary.

Page » A3

**SPORTS**

COVID-19 cancellations and closures make workouts difficult for Hermiston athletes waiting to see if their spring season will happen.

Page » A10

**HOSPITALS**

Good Shepherd Medical Center is altering rules for visitors in light of the coronavirus outbreak.

Page » A7

## CLOSED



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Hermiston High School students leave school for the day Friday afternoon. Students will not return to school until April 28, 2020 as a response to Gov. Kate Brown's directive to close schools through the end of April in an effort to quell the spread of COVID-19.

**BY THE WAY**

### Hermiston library closes for COVID-19

In light of recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control about social distancing during the COVID-19 outbreak, the Hermiston Public Library announced it is closed until further notice. All events and activities are currently suspended, but the staff will provide a drive-up service until 6 p.m. each day.

Patrons may continue to access numerous digital services through its website. For more information, visit [www.hermistonlibrary.us](http://www.hermistonlibrary.us) or call 541-567-2882.

...

Because of restrictions on public gatherings in an effort to control the spread of coronavirus, people are encouraged to double-check organization websites and/or their Facebook pages regarding scheduled events.

While the Hermiston Herald attempts to update its calendar listings, the status of some events and activities are changed or canceled after press deadlines.

...

The regular Open Table food service at

See BTW, Page A2

### Hermiston students get an early spring break after governor orders school closures

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

The Hermiston School Board voted Tuesday afternoon to count the current shutdown as its spring break, but by 5 p.m. the point was already moot.

Governor Kate Brown announced that she was extending the school closure through April 28. She had originally announced Thursday that all Oregon schools should be closed from March 16 to April 1 in light of the COVID-19 health crisis.

Before her announcement Tuesday, Hermiston's school board unanimously voted to count the closure as the district's spring break, and cancel the break originally planned for April 6-10, along with spring parent-teacher conferences planned for April 2-3.

It was a difficult decision for board members, who were split three to three on Friday night before postponing their decision until Tuesday. On Friday, some argued that the state was likely to extend the closure for past their planned spring break anyway, and they didn't want to tell families to cancel expensive travel plans, only to turn around a week later and say, "Never mind."

The "Never mind" came sooner than expected with the governor's announcement Thursday.

On Tuesday, however, board members were united in expressing their beliefs that if they were allowed to bring stu-

**INSIDE**

For a list of meal sites and times, see Page A12

dents back to the classroom on April 1 — the currently scheduled end to the statewide closure for COVID-19 — then they should.

"The overriding sentiment has been that we need to do what's best for the kids," Ginny Holtus said.

She said the state would likely be giving some leniency on instructional hours, state testing and other usual requirements for schools, and she wouldn't want to see Hermiston not qualify for those waivers because it closed longer than the governor had mandated.

Brent Pitney said he had originally been concerned about disrupting staff and students' travel plans, but said most things they would have been traveling to are now shut down anyway.

Not everyone at the meeting felt the same way as the board. Delfino Osario, representing the Hermiston Association of Teachers, noted that Hermiston was in "uncharted waters" because it has a different spring break than all other Oregon schools, which were scheduled to be on break March 23-27 anyway.

He said while students without underlying health conditions are in low-risk categories, many teachers and classified

staff are not.

"Staff are at risk from asymptomatic carriers," he said.

He urged the board to reconsider what he said amounted to the cancellation of spring break.

Maryanna Hardin, a teacher at West Park Elementary School, also asked the board to consider the health of teachers.

"I feel like it's only going to get worse from here on out, but I guess we'll see," she said.

Holtus told Osario and Hardin that the school board was also concerned about protecting health.

"I know the state will supersede this if there is any doubt about the safety of staff and students, and then it will be a moot point," she said.

The board voted unanimously to accept Superintendent Tricia Mooney's recommendation to consider next week spring break, to cancel spring conferences and to cancel a planned board work session on March 23.

Mooney said the state had not made any more announcements yet about whether the April 1 reopen date would be extended, but said there has been talk of a four-week closure.

She said she was happy to report that students were already showing up to pick up sack lunches and breakfasts from the bus stops set up around the city to drop off food, and she expected the numbers

See Closed, Page A12

*"I FEEL LIKE IT'S ONLY GOING TO GET WORSE FROM HERE ON OUT."*

Maryanna Hardin, a teacher at West Park Elementary School, who asked the board to consider the health of teachers.

## Restaurants, bars victims of latest virus measures

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

Last call for Hermiston bars and restaurants took on new meaning Monday night, as they prepared to close for the next four weeks.

On Monday afternoon, Governor Kate Brown ordered all bars and restaurants in the state to close their doors to customers, but allowed them the option of take-out or delivery.

The measure, along with a new prohibition on gatherings of more than 25 people outside of essential locations such as grocery stores and workplaces, are the lat-

est in an escalating attempt to slow the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus.

Nookie's Restaurant and Brewery owner Mitch Myers said he was planning on closing completely, despite the governor's allowance for take-out.

"It just doesn't make any practical sense to gear up for that," he said. "We do room service for the hotel and take-out, but it's such a small part of our business. You have to weigh things like labor costs."

He said on Monday that 10 days prior business was holding steady, seven days ago there was a 5% to 10%

decrease, Thursday and Friday 20%, Saturday 60% and Sunday he had an 80% decrease from normal Sunday customer levels.

"That tells me people don't necessarily want people touching their food right now, people aren't out and about and people are tightening their belts," he said.

Myers said instead of spending money on take-out containers — of which there will likely be a shortage anyway — and firing up the kitchen in the hopes people will order food, he would rather use that money



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Nookie's Restaurant and Brewery has announced that they will close for four weeks as a result of limitations on bars and restaurants in the state of Oregon

See Eateries, Page A12

