

Hermiston Herald

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A Hermiston man's death is being investigated as a homicide after he was found just outside town last week
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BY THE WAY

A note to our readers

In order to encourage social distancing, the **Hermiston Herald** has closed our offices to walk-in traffic for the foreseeable future.

If you need to get in touch with us, you can call 541-567-6457 or look up individual staff members' email addresses on the staff directory at www.hermistonherald.com/site/directory.html. You can also drop off payments in the locked box outside our front door at 333 E Main St.

We continue to send out print newspapers to our subscribers each Wednesday, but because we don't know what the future holds when it comes to new social distancing mandates, we would also encourage all print subscribers to take a few minutes to register your subscription now, so that in you can still receive an e-edition of the paper in your email and have full access to our website, which comes free with a print subscription, in the event that mail service is disrupted.

You can find the registration form and instructions under the large "Register your subscription" button we have added to the top of our website. If you get stuck, call 1-800-522-0255 on Mondays through Fridays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Caution tape surrounds the playground and basketball courts at Bard Park in Stanfield on Monday afternoon. Gov. Kate Brown issued a statewide stay-at-home order Monday morning, closing playgrounds and gathering places across the state.

City leaders urge Hermiston residents to avoid unnecessary exposure after governor issues order

By **JADE MCDOWELL, ANNIE FOWLER** and **DICK HUGHES**
EO MEDIA GROUP

There was barely anything on the Hermiston City Council agenda on Monday night, but an audience of more than 50 people showed up anyway.

Don't worry; they were practicing safe social distancing. They were watching a live stream of the meeting on Facebook.

It may have been a sign of just how bored self-quarantiners have become, but according to Facebook, the video had been watched more than 1,000 times by Tuesday morning — a hundred times more citizens than normally participate in a council meeting.

The city council doesn't usually stream its meetings, but did so Monday night — with an additional option to listen by phone — in order to encourage people to follow Governor Kate Brown's plea that Oregonians stay in their homes as much as possible.

Councilors, sitting six feet apart, followed up with a plea of their own, as they discussed and ultimately decided to change city council meetings to once a month (the minimum mandated by the city charter) for the foreseeable future. Committee meetings have also been canceled, other than the planning commission and budget committee both needing to meet in May.

"We all need to make sacrifices," councilor John Kirwan said. "So, you know, I think us as a council, we should be leading by example moving forward. If we don't need to be in meetings we shouldn't be."

He lamented the number of people

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who were still choosing to go out for frivolous reasons, when staying home could save lives.

"When have we ever been asked to save the world by staying home?" he asked.

Mayor David Drotzmann also urged people to avoid unnecessary trips out in public, in light of the fact that many people who contract COVID-19 never show any symptoms, but can still spread it to others at risk for serious complications.

"None of us knows — we could all be walking around as carriers right now," he said.

He said he preferred the term "physical distancing" to "social distancing" because he hoped people in the community are still reaching out to each other through phone, video chat and other safe methods. He also encouraged people who have extra to share supplies if they can.

"Don't go an hoard all the toilet paper," he said. "Don't go and hoard all the canned goods and alcohol and cleaning supplies. You don't need a year's worth."

Councilor Roy Barron encouraged people to continue to support local businesses in what ways they can, such as ordering take-out from local restaurants.

Barron, a teacher for Hermiston School District, also gave a shout out to the other teachers in the area who were concerned about their students, particu-



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Samantha Cox files a customer's nails at Ellig'ance Hair Salon in Hermiston on Monday afternoon. Hair and nail salons are among businesses ordered to close.

larly those who don't live in a safe home environment.

City manager Byron Smith reviewed steps that the city has taken to comply with the governor's orders, including making visits to city offices by appointment only and encouraging as much business as possible to be conducted over the phone or online. People who don't have internet access can still drop off their utility bill at 180 NE Gladys Avenue.

"People can still use the drop box at the old city hall, and people have been using it," he said.

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Hospital prepares for COVID-19

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Good Shepherd Health Care System in Hermiston has made several changes to its operations in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

It has followed Governor Kate Brown's order to temporarily stop all surgeries for non-life-threatening and non-urgent procedures, in order to preserve stocks of personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks and surgical gowns.

CEO Dennis Burke told the *East Oregonian* that hospitals have been told to prepare all of their capacity for

critical patients that could be coming in during the outbreak. For the moment, that actually means fewer people than normal are coming and going from their campus.

"We're preparing for the 'what if', but that hasn't happened yet," Burke said.

Communications director Caitlin Cozad said in an email Friday night that Good Shepherd is "judiciously monitoring" their personal protective equipment in light of the national shortage.

"We have plenty of some supplies, while others are



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Hospital workers screen people arriving at Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston on Monday afternoon.

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