

Hermiston Herald

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2020

HermistonHerald.com

\$1.50

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Hermiston City Councilor John Kirwan announced Monday he is leaving Hermiston
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BY THE WAY

Hermiston Herald to change formats next week

This is a reminder that starting next week, the **Hermiston Herald** will be making big changes.

The newspaper will be delivered to all Hermiston residents, free of charge, and will be available on newsstands for free to those who don't fall within the home delivery radius. News will also be available for free online at www.hermistonherald.com and on the *Hermiston Herald* news app.

Current subscribers to the *Hermiston Herald* will have their subscription converted into an *East Oregonian* subscription. They will receive the *EO* at no additional cost for the remainder of the time left on their *Herald* subscription.

While we are keeping many of our current features, including Three Minutes, By the Way and Hermiston History, we will also be adding a new opinion page, a weekly business column and other features to replace

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Housing the homeless



Photo contributed by the Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless

A proposed emergency shelter for the homeless in Hermiston, known as Stepping Stones, would be modeled after the sleep center created by Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless, pictured here.

Hermiston group proposes using Conestoga huts to shelter homeless residents

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

A grassroots effort in Hermiston is building the foundation for a proposed new shelter for the city's homeless residents.

Board members of a newly formed nonprofit, known as Stepping Stones, presented an idea for a new kind of emergency shelter at Monday night's city council meeting. The city council held off on approval of the project until they could see more refined plans, but agreed to start the process of creating new zoning rules for it.

Longtime Hermiston residents Cathy Lloyd, Michael Atkinson and Jeff Snell said Stepping Stones hopes to model their project after the sleep center in Walla Walla run by the Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless, using small Conestoga huts to provide temporary shelter.

"I have worked in the warming station in Hermiston for a number of years," Lloyd said. "I've been a volunteer there and while I love the fact that through three months out of the year we provide shelter for those who don't have any, we have another nine months that we don't provide any shelter."

She said the Hermiston Warming Station has limitations — guests sleep on mats about 16 inches apart, which



Photo contributed by Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless

A proposed emergency shelter for the homeless in Hermiston, known as Stepping Stones, would be modeled after the sleep center created by Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless. One of the Walla Walla huts is pictured here.

puts them at risk for picking up illnesses and doesn't afford any privacy. They don't have anywhere to leave their belongings during the day, aren't allowed to bring food in, and can't stay up and read or do other activities after

lights out.

The plan

The Stepping Stones project would provide 25 Conestoga huts on about 0.8 acres of land behind the Agape House, which provides emergency

food boxes and other services to people in need. The project would also include a commons area and, if funding permits, showers and laundry.

Each 6-foot by 10-foot hut would hold a single person, a couple, or a single parent with one child. Stepping Stones would provide the bedding for the bed frames inside — including plenty of heavy blankets during cold weather — and launder it once a week.

The huts would not have electricity or running water, but Lloyd said they are small and well-insulated, and run about 30- to 35-degrees warmer than the outdoors during the winter.

"These structures don't fit into HUD standards for housing," she said. "They're not in any way meant to be permanent housing. This is a stepping stone. That's why we chose that name. We want this to be a step from having nothing to becoming self-reliant. They are affordable, but they are not so comfortable that people want to stay in them forever."

Lloyd said a heated, lighted commons building would allow people to stay up as long as they wanted to read, play cards, charge their cellphone or just relax. On the other hand, right now she hears from people who don't want to stay at the warming station

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Sole proprietors face tough road

Some have a hard time getting stimulus funding

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

As stimulus money helps prop up the economy, sole proprietors are getting left out of some types of help.

The Paycheck Protection Program, for example, was launched to provide loans to cover payroll, rent and utilities, which can be forgiven if up to 75% of the money is spent on payroll. The initial guidelines left business owners without any employees out in the cold at first, and by the time the program was

opened up to them a week later, the money was gone before those in the back of the line got anything.

Judy Gormley, who owns Neighborhood Books & Gifts in Hermiston with her husband, Michael, said she was still waiting to hear back from their accountant on questions about whether they qualify to apply for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan, which is also currently out of money.

"It's really hard to get good information, because it's all new," she said. "Even the banks don't know. It takes a lot of time to figure out. I spent hours a couple of weeks ago."

Thursday afternoon Gormley said she was waiting to hear back from Umatilla County about whether Neighborhood Books & Gifts would get one of the county's grants for small businesses affected by COVID-19, which were being awarded by random draw. An hour later she called back with good news — the bookstore will get \$1,000 from the county.

"That does help a huge amount," she said.

Bookstores weren't specified by name in Gov. Kate Brown's executive order of March 23 shutting down

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Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

A passerby is reflected in the window of Neighborhood Books & Gifts in Hermiston on Monday afternoon. The business, which has been closed under the governor's stay-home order, is among those left out of the initial iteration of the Paycheck Protection Program.

