

IN THE WORKS

New housing projects coming to Hermiston

Welcome to “In the Works,” a new feature for this new iteration of the *Hermiston Herald*.

Over the years I’ve reported on new businesses when they’ve opened, new construction projects when the groundbreaking happened or new subdivisions when they city council votes to approve their zoning. But with this new column I’m hoping to provide Hermiston residents with information about projects that are still in the very earliest of phases, giving people a sneak peek at economic development in the months and years ahead.

For the column, I’ll be checking up on planning commission meetings, building permits, business filings with the Oregon Secretary of State’s Office and other resources, but I’m hoping that readers will be a source of information and ideas as well. Did you hear from a credible source that a long-empty commercial building was just purchased? Have you noticed that someone is laying pipes in an empty lot down the street from your house? Do you know someone who is putting



Jade McDowell
NEWS EDITOR



Developer Tanner Wideriksen, his wife, Sandra Wideriksen, and children Galilea and Ezekiel cut the ribbon for a new phase of the Cimmarron Terrace development in December 2019.

HH file photo

together a business plan for a new restaurant? Let me know and I’ll look into it.

For this week, I’ll start with a look at building permits issued in Hermiston in March.

In March, the city of Hermiston issued eight building permits. Four of

those were for new homes, going up at 938 S.W. Coyote Dr. (for \$328,678), 1475 E. Hurlburt Ave. (\$218,850), 1547 E. Hurlburt Ave. (\$250,165) and 1323 E. Newport Ave. (\$218,850).

Those joined seven new homes permitted in Febru-

ary and three in January.

A look at actions of Hermiston’s planning commission over the past few months indicate more homes will likely be on the way.

In March, the commission approved the final plat for Phase 2 of Cim-

maron Terrace. The phase will be comprised of 38 new homes located on the southeast corner of Northeast Eighth Street and East Theater Lane. The homes will have an average price of \$275,000, according to documentation submitted to the commission.

In February, the commission voted to recommend approval of the annexation of 20 acres off of East Punkin Center and Northeast Fourth Street, which the city council then approved in March. Monte-Vista Homes plans to create a subdivision with 100 single-family homes, a multi-use trail and a public park.

In December, the commission approved a conditional use permit for Santiago Communities Inc. to construct a 200-space manufactured home park on property north of East Diagonal Boulevard and west of Northeast 10th Street.

In November, the city council approved annexation and zoning changes recommended by the planning commission in order to allow a subdivision that would include 25 acres of “moderate” single-family homes, plus 45 units of duplexes and triplexes for senior residents, walking trails and a few commercial businesses. The subdivision, which would be developed by Lloyd and Lois Piercy, would be located on 36 acres at the intersection of Elm Avenue and Diagonal Road.

Jade McDowell is the editor of the Hermiston Herald and has covered economic development in Hermiston since 2013.

All that Wood switching to vinyl

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

All That Wood will soon feature none of that wood.

The Hermiston fencing company is shifting to all vinyl fencing — a change owner Mike McKamey says came on much sooner than expected due to COVID-19.

The pandemic continues to impact various industries in new and unforeseen ways, and for the fencing business, McKamey said it has been “extremely busy.”

The remaining wood he thought would last all season will likely be gone within the week, thanks to the extra time people have on their hands for home renovation.

“With everyone staying home, my inventory went ‘poof,’” he said.

Dropping the cedar fencing that All That Wood was previously known for would have come eventually, he said. Canada recently announced they are planning to halt all harvesting of the old growth cedar that the business

had been importing. And McKamey said the available stock kept increasing in price and decreasing in quality.

“What’s available out there is just nothing I would sell to customers,” he said.

In addition, vinyl fencing has become more popular, in part because it is easier to maintain.

As a result, All That Wood is rebranding now to All That Wood Vinyl Fence Sales, and will no longer sell wooden fence materials.

Umatilla Electric Cooperative set new sales records in 2019

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Growth at the Port of Morrow and in the greater Hermiston area helped spur increased power sales for Umatilla Electric Cooperative in 2019.

The board released its annual report in April, after holding its annual membership meeting virtually because of COVID-19.

The cooperative saw an almost 20% increase in sales in 2019, and its operating revenue went from \$126.5 million in 2018 to \$151.5 million. For the first time, UEC sold 10 million kilowatt hours in a single day on June 10, only to top that record the next day.

“As our economy expanded in technology, transportation, farming and food processing, we delivered more than 3 billion kilowatt hours in our core mission of providing safe, reliable and affordable energy to our members,” a

news release stated.

In its 2008 annual report, UEC reported that industrial customers made up 24.7% of its revenue. In 2018, that number was up to 64.2%. It rose again in 2019 to 69.5% of sales.

Even as UEC sold more power, it also helped customers become more energy efficient. According to the news release, during a two-year federal reporting period that ended in September 2019, UEC completed 450 projects saving more than 50 million kilowatt hours. It paid out more than \$1 million in energy efficiency rebates.

The cooperative also completed new projects to expand capacity and reliability, including news transmission lines in the Hermiston and Boardman areas, rebuilding the Herm-



Otis



Platt



Pitzer

iston Butte Substation and doubling the capacity of the Hermiston East Substation built in 2017.

Three of the seven positions on UEC’s board of directors were up for reelection between March 28 and April 18.

Incumbent Glenn Rohde was unseated by Tom Pitzer, who will now represent District 5. Steve Platt survived a challenge by candidate Anne Livingston to continue representing District 6. John Otis will continue representing District 7 after a race against challenger Jim Voss.

For more information, or to obtain a copy of the 2019 report, email member.services@umatillaelectric.com.

Simmons Health Insurance Partners

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

It may include some familiar faces, but Simmons Health Insurance Partners is a new business for the Hermiston area.

Josh Goller purchased the health insurance side of The Simmons Agency in January, splitting those services from the main company and launching an affiliated business.

Prior to the change, Goller had handled the bulk of the health insurance work for The Simmons Agency for a decade. He said the same quality and breadth of service is

available under Simmons Health Insurance Partners. In fact, some customers might not even realize it is a separate business.

“Even though perhaps the the structure has changed a little, folks can still expect the same level of service,” he said.

The business is located at 125 Southeast Seventh St., where the original Simmons offices were.

Goller said health insurance has become an especially important topic during the COVID-19 outbreak, as people lose their jobs and have to try and navigate the process of making sure they still have

coverage. Others are worried about what will be covered if they get sick, or are trying to navigate normal life changes like the transition to Medicare coverage.

For more information, visit www.simmonshealthinsurance.partners.

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