

IN THE WORKS



Photo contributed by Larry Fetter

A rendering shows a draft of what the Funland playground will look like, although parks and recreation director Larry Fetter said designers are still making adjustments.

New playground coming this fall

By JADE MCDOWELL
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Some projects in Hermiston have been put on hold thanks to COVID-19, but Larry Fetter, director of Hermiston's parks and recreation department, says the new Funland playground at Butte Park is still expected to finish this fall.

Playgrounds will remain closed under Phase One of the state's reopening plan, so the parks department is keeping their fingers crossed that Umatilla County's COVID-19 numbers are good enough to move on to higher phases this fall, since, as Fetter said, it would be sad for the city to finish a brand new playground, and then have to tell children they're not allowed to play on it yet.

The rendering attached to this column shows a general idea of what the new playground will look like, although tweaks are still being made to the design and colors. Playcraft Systems of Grants Pass is doing most of the work on the playground, with some specialty pieces, such as the giant watermelon slice being manufactured by a company in Colorado.

The city got about \$700,000 from its insurance company after the former Funland playground burned down, and Fetter said local companies and individuals have

contributed another \$700,000 so far. Engraved fence pickets are still for sale, at \$100 for an individual or family's name and \$250 for a business name, online at bit.ly/funlandpicket.

Look for more information about who donated and more details about the playground's final design in a future edition of the *Hermiston Herald*.

Hermiston is also getting a new Vietnamese restaurant, although it is unclear when it will open. A sign went up on the former Walker's Farm Kitchen building at 920 SE Fourth St. near Rite Aid this spring announcing Pho Quan Vietnamese cuisine coming soon.

Michael Dang and Vandal Dang registered the business with the Secretary of State in January. I've reached out to them about their plans, but haven't heard back yet.

I'm also waiting to hear from the new owners of the former Mike's Market building on 905 W Hermiston Ave. Renovations are currently underway to transform it into Pepe's Market.

The business was recently registered with the Secretary of State by Rafael Muniz.

Maxwell Market, Hermiston's farmers market, is currently in talks with Umatilla County officials about what will be allowed when the market opens. Stay tuned for more information next week about plans for this year's season, which organizers plan to go ahead with in some form.

Umatilla county says goodbye to exotic dancers

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The Riverside Sports Bar has been closed for COVID-19, but once it reopens it will no longer feature exotic dancers.

The change means Umatilla will be strip club-free for the first time since the Riverside opened in 1994. When the town got its third adult entertainment business in 2014, it caused outcry from residents who petitioned the city council to find a way to keep that category of business out.

Riverside owner Daren Duffloth said he and his wife Paulette have been aware of the discomfort that some people in the community felt over the issue, and they had been talking for "many years" about removing the lounge section of the bar. When COVID-19 presented an opportunity to spend some time renovating the building, it seemed like the right time to finally take the stage out.

"We're moving forward to a family-friendly environment," he said.

The Duffloths aren't guaranteeing that side of the business will be gone forever — they could reassess sometime in the future if their new business model isn't working out. But for the foreseeable future, the shiny gold poles have come down, and will stay down when the rest of the business reopens.

Duffloth said once things "get back to normal" the newly renovated former lounge area will provide a gathering space for community events, business meetings or private parties.

They're also "revamping" the menu, creating more of a bistro feel, and are looking at changing their name in the coming months.

"We're very, very excited about it," he said.



Photo contributed by Riverside Sports Bar

The lounge at Riverside Sports Bar is currently undergoing a remodel, including removal of the stage and poles previously used by dancers.

For now, they're closed completely, but Duffloth said they plan to open back up for takeout around May 18.

The Duffloth family has owned the Umatilla business since opening it in 1994. They have been active in sports boosters, Little League and other Umatilla organizations, and Daren previously served as a city councilor, and then mayor.

He said he understood that there were people in town that respected their family for those activities, but not so much for the adult entertainment side of their business. So he's happy now to provide a business model that is "more palatable to the community."

Umatilla School District Superintendent Heidi Sipe said she was thrilled to hear the news. She is one of those Umatilla residents who has expressed respect and friendship with the Duffloths, but didn't like the exotic dancing side of their business.

Sipe and her husband bought out Umatilla's other strip club, Honey

Bunnz Hideout, in December, and rented out the building to a gift shop, a barbecue restaurant and a fruteria that is waiting for approval from the health department to open.

"Our intent was to make sure there were no adult-themed businesses in such close proximity to the schools," she said.

On Wednesday afternoon, Daren and Paulette posted a live video to the Riverside's Facebook page, showing the dance poles and center stage being removed.

"We have been closed for seven weeks now, it will be eight weeks on Monday," Paulette told viewers. "There's a lot to consider when a business has been shut down for this long, and everything that has surrounded the reopen with all the restrictions that have come about ... We at the Riverside have not taken this downtime for granted. We've done a lot of remodeling, we've done a whole bunch of fresh new things here and we still have a lot of projects and a lot of things still to go."

IN BRIEF

Thirty-five Umatilla County businesses got PPP loans through Umpqua Bank

Thirty-five Umatilla County businesses have received Paycheck Protection Loans through Umpqua Bank so far.

The bank reported May 8 that the forgivable federal loans, authorized through the stimulus package known as the CARES Act, has allowed about 300 workers in the

county to either keep their jobs or return to them.

Pendleton businesses received a majority of the bank's loans within the county, with \$1.54 million through 20 loans. Statewide, Umpqua helped businesses secure \$750 million in loans to help them continue paying employees during COVID-19.

Umpqua is one of several lenders in Umatilla County that qualified to process Paycheck

Protection Loans.

According to the Small Business Administration, which administers the loans, the second round of the PPP handed out more than \$3.8 billion to 18,732 business in Oregon, while the first round awarded more than \$3 billion to 31,119 Oregon businesses.

Nationally, a total of \$530 billion has been handed out to more than 4.2 million businesses since the program was announced.

5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Always call 8-1-1 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:

Source: call811.com



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.

1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.

2-3

3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



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