

UPDATES

Umatilla County reaches 109 confirmed COVID-19 cases

Umatilla County Public Health announced four new confirmed cases of COVID-19 on May 26, bringing the county's latest total to 109.

The county also has four presumptive cases of patients who have been in close contact with a confirmed case and are now showing symptoms, but have not received test results.

Based on its May 26 numbers, the county has 92 people who have recovered from COVID-19 and three who have died. Another 18 confirmed and presumptive cases are currently active, including one person in the hospital. More than half the cases confirmed have been residents of the Hermiston and Umatilla ZIP codes.

So far, 1,496 have also tested negative in the county, according to the health department.

Statewide, the Oregon Health Authority website on May 26 showed 3,967 confirmed cases in the state and 148 deaths caused by COVID-19.

Nationally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported more than 1.6 million confirmed cases and 98,261 deaths.

Anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms they are concerned about is encouraged to call their primary care provider.

SALONS REOPEN WITH CAUTION

Stylists deluged with calls

By KATHY ANEY
STAFF WRITER

Hair stylist Tricia Marquez waited for her next client. She had disinfected her styling chair after the last client and wiped door handles and other high-touch areas. The waiting area gleamed, devoid of magazines and other unnecessary items. A bright pink mask with the words "Dye Pretty" hung from her neck.

After two months of closure during Gov. Kate Brown's stay-at-home order, salons got permis-

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Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Stylist Tricia Marquez applies color to the hair of Jennifer McDonough on May 23 at Trim'Ers salon in Hermiston.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Stylist Heather Smith applies color to the hair of Brenda Cooper on May 23 at the Ellig'ance by Cherice salon in Hermiston.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Stylist Tricia Marquez applies color to the hair of Jennifer McDonough on May 23 at Trim'Ers salon in Hermiston.

Hermiston budgets for 2020-21 amid COVID-19

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

City budgets lay out a road map of projects for the upcoming fiscal year, but Hermiston City Manager Byron Smith told budget committee members on May 21 that the city may have to make some adjustments as the fuller picture of COVID-19's economic impacts becomes clear.

The budget committee approved the 2020-21 budget on May 21, recommending it to the Hermiston City Council for final approval during the council's June 8 meeting.

The city had originally planned to give all employees a 2.75% cost of living increase in July at the beginning of the fiscal year, but Smith told the committee that raise will now be held off until at least January 2021. Smith said the city would see what effect the economic downturn has on property tax revenue,

which makes up a majority of the city's incoming funds.

"If we're going to have negative impact on our revenues, we'll know in November," he said.

The cost of living increase would have cost the city approximately \$275,000 for the entire year if implemented July 1.

Smith said the city has seen "slow and steady" growth in property values over the past nine years, and during the 2019-20 fiscal year passed the \$1 billion mark in assessed value.

He said the city budgeted for lower than usual amounts of other revenue that have slowed or stopped during the pandemic, such as rentals of the Hermiston Community Center and Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, revenue from the Hermiston Aquatic Center and transient room taxes on hotel stays. The city plans to add two new

positions, both to the police department. One, a new school resource officer, will focus solely on middle school students while school is in session, and will be funded 75% by the Hermiston School District. The other is a new records clerk. Smith said the police department has seen a large increase in requests for footage from body cameras, which takes time to go through the videos and make sure there are no HIPPA violations or other things that need to be redacted.

"We're not only getting a lot more requests, but they're taking a lot more time," he said.

The city's biggest capital improvement projects planned for the year come in the water and wastewater department. They include a \$610,000 project to replace sewer lines at what Smith called the

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Staff photo by Jade McDowell
The Hermiston City Council is considering tearing down the current city hall and building a \$9 million replacement on the site.

INSIDE

Inside ▶ A special section honors the Class of 2020

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