

Fair:

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and talking her animal up to potential auction buyers — something she’ll miss doing this year.

But even with just a photo to show bidders, she said she had faith that the community would come through for its youth as usual. Last year, the auction raised more than \$600,000 total for participating students, who often use the money for everything from college savings to buying their own head of cattle.

“It’s such a vital thing that the community is not just going to forget about it,” she said.

Emily Lillegard, 16, of Stanfield, said on Monday, Aug. 10, that dropping her lamb Bandit off was probably going to be a little harder than saying goodbye during the auction, because she wouldn’t have spent all week with Bandit.

She said raising a lamb is still rewarding, hard work, however, even if she didn’t get to do the usual showmanship activities at the fair.

The absence of most of the usual fair activities was also hard for the adults who usually participate. Gay and Alice Newman were set to be the fair parade’s grand marshals this year, after more than four decades of participation in the fair. Between the two of them, the “dynamic duo” have served on various fair committees, as leaders of 4-H and FFA, on the fair board, as a fair court chaperone



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
A goat peers from its pen in the livestock barn on the first day of the 2020 Umatilla County Fair Modified Youth Livestock Show on Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2020, at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston.

and as volunteers in nearly every capacity possible at the fair.

Gay Newman said they would miss being able to have their usual level of participation, but they were still helping weigh animals on Tuesday morning, Aug. 11.

He said the fair has always been his family’s “big thing” and it was tough not being able to enjoy all the normal trappings of fair week, even if they understood why.

“I miss it,” he said. “You don’t get to talk to the kids and listen to their stories and see the excitement on their faces.”

Still, he said, the community has always been supportive of the fair and he has faith that they will be back in strong form next year.

“We’ll get through this,” he said.

Anna Browne, 4-H coordinator with the Oregon State University extension

center in Hermiston, said 4-H participants were uploading home-made showmanship videos for judges to watch, and the community can watch confirmation of the animals each day through a video feed Hermiston School District has created on its YouTube Channel at youtube.com/c/HSDCommunications.

A link to the video, as well as livestock scores, photos, winners and more, are being posted on the Umatilla County Fair Youth Livestock Auction page.

4-H youths have also been participating online by holding live competitions over Zoom for categories, such as cooking and public speech.

“It’s been a bit of a learning process,” Browne said. “Some things we’ve done have been fun, just different. I appreciate the kids who have been willing to take the risk with the video format.”



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Volunteers check in animals on the first day of the 2020 Umatilla County Fair Modified Youth Livestock Show on Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2020, at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Volunteers show market lambs on the first day of the 2020 Umatilla County Fair Modified Youth Livestock Show on Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2020, at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston. Due to COVID-19 safety precautions, all animals were shown by the same group of volunteers and members of the public, and those who raised the animals were required to watch via livestream if they wanted to take part.

Council:

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which the city plans to cover using payment from enterprise zone projects and from Umatilla County.

The county plans to lease space in the new city hall. The agreement between the two entities would give the county about 5,000 square feet of space for up to 15 years in exchange for \$3 million, about \$400,000 of which would be represented by the county giving the city its building at 435 E. Newport Ave.

The city council voted unanimously to authorize staff to execute the issuance of full faith and credit bonds up to \$9.6 million.

Park plan

During the Aug. 10 meeting the council also approved a new open space master plan for parks and recreation. Parks and Recreation Director Larry Fetter told the council that the plan does not commit the city to spending any money, but rather provides a vision created out of a yearlong process of research and gathering community feedback.

“I just want to remind you this plan is intended to be visionary, inspirational, to provide alternatives and partnerships to create new park facilities and recreation programming,” he said.

The 20-year master plan, which the council discussed in depth during a July 13 workshop, includes a wellness center with an indoor pool likely built on the old fairgrounds near the high school and a multi-field sports complex across 11th Street from Good Shepherd Medical Center. It also includes new neighborhood parks, trails and improve-

ments to current parks, such as Steelhead Park.

City councilors praised the plan.

“It’s a very good, all-inclusive parks plan,” said Jackie Myers, who sits on the parks and recreation committee. “There’s a little bit for everyone.”

Land surplus

Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan proposed the city use what is known in the business world as the “razor and blade” approach to recoup some of its investment on a 20-acre property known as the Green Property on the south side of the city’s wastewater treatment plant.

The razor and blade strategy refers to giving something of value away or selling it cheaply in order to cause people to spend more money later on — such as a razor company selling a razor handle at cost to hook people into buying profitable replacement blades from the company again and again.

The city purchased the Green Property for \$420,000 in 2006 with the idea of using the land to cool down recycled water coming out of the treatment plant before it hit the Umatilla River. Tests on the site to that effect did not pan out, Morgan said, and now the city pumps that water into irrigation ditches instead of the river during the summer.

Morgan said because the city removed the home and barns that had been on the property, and then built monitoring wells, it is highly unlikely that if the city put the entire property up for open auction that it would get what it paid for.

He said judging by similar property in the vicinity, the city would likely get about \$325,000 at auction

and someone would put a house and some barns there, resulting in about \$58,000 in property taxes and \$15,000 in base utility fees for the city over the next 20 years.

If the city were to make an agreement with a developer specializing in senior citizen housing developments, Morgan estimated that if a developer put in a \$3 million assisted living facility and a 28-unit duplex development the city would get \$1.14 million in property taxes and \$1.8 million in base utility fees over 20 years.

He said the development would provide a psychological buffer against the treatment plant for other potential developers for land farther south of the plant, and such a development would create jobs and provide more housing options for the wave of retiring Baby Boomers.

Mary Gill told the council her property ran along 75% of the property’s southern border, and other family members own other land nearby. She asked that the city consider selling the property to her family at fair market value. She acknowledged that she would plan on making a boundary adjustment that would pull the property back into the county, meaning the city wouldn’t make additional money from the property, but said she didn’t think the site was a good location for housing.

“The thought of having duplexes on that side of my property breaks my heart,” she said.

The council voted unanimously to allow city staff to market the property to developers and see what types of proposals those developers were willing to put forth.

Homeless discussion

During the Aug. 10 meeting, the council also discussed a variety of other topics, including ways COVID-19 continues to impact the community.

Mayor David Drotzmann said he seemed to be seeing a lot of “new faces” on the street and asked Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston if it seemed like there had been an increase in Hermiston’s homeless population this year.

Edmiston said the department doesn’t make any official counts of homelessness in Hermiston, but he had noticed an uptick in calls for service relating to transient individuals. He said for the first 10 days of August, 39% of the calls the day shift responded to involved a homeless resident, and 30% of calls on the night shift.

“It’s to the point where I’ve had several conversations with the city manager,” he said.

When Drotzmann asked

whether they were people who had previously lived in the area but were newly homeless or had recently moved to the area, Edmiston said some people are Hermiston residents “we have dealt with over the years and are now transient.” But he also said the department arrested one person from Washington who specifically told them he had come to Hermiston to wait for the possibility of getting a hut through the Stepping Stones project that a private group has proposed as a way of creating additional shelter for the homeless in Hermiston.

Edmiston said there were other reasons a homeless individual might move to Hermiston as well, including Oregon’s continued steps in decriminalizing controlled

substances. He said some individuals with mental illnesses also prefer to live in rural areas with fewer mental health services available so they won’t be “forced” into treatment.

Drotzmann reminded the audience that the city is using some of its federal CARES Act stimulus money to create a new rental and mortgage assistance program through the nonprofit CAPECO, which people can access if they are struggling to keep their home.

Smith noted that the city’s planning commission will be discussing possible changes to the city’s zoning rules on Wednesday, Aug. 12, at 7 p.m. at the Hermiston Community Center that would allow emergency shelter projects, such as Stepping Stones, to exist.

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