

Umatilla County Sheriff's Office prepares to add body cameras

By **ALEX CASTLE**
STAFF WRITER

As calls for police accountability reach each corner of the country, the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office is preparing to outfit its deputies with body-worn cameras.

"I believe there's been a lot of commentary in the press and so on about the use of the body cameras and the need for departments to have that available," Umatilla County Commissioner Bill Elfering said at a county meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 2. "I think we have some liability outstanding if we don't have it, and I think it significantly adds to the professionalism of our department."



HH file photo

In preparation for the cameras, the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners approved the sheriff's office to purchase additional equipment for \$24,185 that will expand its server space to store footage and software to redact portions of the footage. It will be the first update to the sheriff's office

The city of Hermiston spent \$70,000 in late 2014 to give its police department lapel-mounted mounted body cameras for its officers. Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan said the costs associated with the cameras are what delayed his department from adding them until 2020.

server system for police footage since it was implemented with the department's in-car video system in 2012.

"It's going to be essential to have a server that's sufficient to cover both of those," Capt. Dave Williams said at the Sept. 2 meeting.

Hermiston Police Department has been using body cameras since 2015. Police Chief Jason Edmiston said in a recent interview with the *East Oregonian* that he was glad the union was "absolutely in favor" of body cameras as a way to keep both law enforcement and citizens accountable during interactions. When citizens make complaints, it is helpful to be able to review body camera footage to see if an officer fell short, and provide correction as needed.

"When we don't put our best foot forward we need to take appropriate action," he said.

Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan said there's not a set date for when the body cameras will be

deployed by the department this year, and it may take two waves of implementation before every deputy is outfitted with one. However, he said the goal is to deploy all of them by the end of the calendar year.

Rowan said his department's wait on implementing them compared to other area agencies came from concerns about costs and a first priority on expanding the department's number of patrol deputies in the county.

"It's always something we knew we'd have to be creative with in order to bring them to our agency," he said.

News editor Jade McDowell contributed to this report.

Hermiston gets \$1.5 million federal economic development grant

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

The city of Hermiston made significant progress toward a planned project in its South Hermiston Industrial Park after the federal Economic Development Administration announced a nearly \$1.5 million grant to the city.

The city hopes to use the money to make the industry park along South Highway 395 more "shovel ready" to attract new development, creating 16 new parcels in the federally approved Opportunity Zone.

Improvements being

considered would include new water and sewer mains between South Highway 395 and Penney Avenue along an unimproved right-of-way and into property owned by the Port of Umatilla. It would also include paving the currently undeveloped Southeast 10th Street right-of-way, turning it into essentially a new road, and paving Campbell Drive.

The projects aren't ready for a green light quite yet, however, as the grant requires a dollar-for-dollar match from the city.

"While it is nice to receive a \$1.4 million fed-

eral grant, we still need to come up with \$1.4 million ourselves," assistant city manager Mark Morgan said.

Morgan said the city, Umatilla County and the Port of Umatilla will provide about \$900,000 of the required match, and then the city hopes to form a local improvement district that would require the surrounding property owners to chip in the rest. The city council will have to go through a public hearing process and allow property owners the chance to reject the proposal if at least 60% formally oppose it.

Rep. Greg Walden's

office announced the grant funding on Tuesday, Sept. 8, and applauded the EDA for its contribution to Hermiston.

"I've said it before and I will say it again — the Trump Administration and Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross continue to deliver for Oregonians and provide the support we need in our part of the state to help us recover from some of the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic," Walden said in a news release. "This money will support new water infrastructure in Hermiston, helping to grow

the economy and jobs in eastern Oregon."

According to the news release, the improvements are projected to encourage as many as 250 new jobs and \$70 million in private investment in the industrial park. Morgan said the investment will allow the city to place more focus on supporting smaller light-industrial developments that only need one to five acres.

Morgan said COVID-19 has had some "interesting

impacts" on costs of construction materials since the city first planned the project in 2019, but the city can always scale back how far the new road extends into the industrial park if needed.

He said he was grateful for Umatilla County and the Port of Umatilla for understanding the need to develop Hermiston's prime industrial land and "readily volunteering" to assist in the funding match.

Umatilla County reports 40th COVID death

HERMISTON HERALD

Umatilla County reported the 40th death of a county resident who had tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday, Sept. 8.

According to a press release, the resident was a 68-year-old male who tested positive for the virus on June 23 and died at a private residence on July 16.

"The death certificate listed COVID-19 disease or SARS-CoV-2 as a cause of death or a significant condition contributing to death," the press release stated.

Umatilla County Public Health also reported 36 new confirmed cases of the virus stretching from Friday, Sept. 4, to Tuesday, Sept. 8.

According to department, there have been

2,795 total cases within the county. This count includes 148 presumptive cases of the virus, which refer to the number of people who have symptoms and a known exposure to someone who has tested positive but have not yet tested positive themselves.

If those individuals test positive, they are then recategorized as confirmed

cases and removed from the tally of presumptive cases. Hospitalizations have declined to five as of Sept. 8.

Oregon Health Authority reported 169 new confirmed and presumptive cases of COVID-19 as of 12:01 a.m. on Sept. 8, bringing the state total to 28,355 and 486 deaths of persons positive for COVID-19.

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