

City approves franchise agreement with U.S. Cellular

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The Hermiston city council approved a franchise agreement during their Monday, March 8, meeting to allow U.S. Cellular to place small cell wireless technology used for 5G cell phone coverage around the city.

Cellphone carriers, internet service providers and other telecommunication companies pay fees known as franchise fees to place their technology on city rights of way. The five-year agreement approved Monday, which will allow a company known as Oregon RSA#2 to place the small cell technology on behalf of U.S. Cellular to bring faster upload and download speeds to customers in the area, is the first for the city for this type of technology.

Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan told the council the city's legal counsel specializing in telecommunications agreements has been working on the agree-



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

The Pheasant Bar and Grill, pictured in this May 2020 file photo, received a façade grant from the city of Hermiston for updated awnings and other façade upgrades during the city council's Monday, March 8, 2021, meeting.

ment over the past two years. The initial agreement is for placement of 21 receivers, six of which will be placed on existing utility poles instead of new ones.

Morgan said the Federal Communications Commission has created a set of "safe harbor" fees that cities can charge cell phone carriers without worry that pending rulemaking and legal battles will cause their rates

to be rolled back by a court case later. That rate means the franchise agreement approved Monday will generate \$5,670 in general fund revenues for Hermiston in 2021, and increase by 3% per year after, plus an additional \$270 per any additional locations added later.

During their March 8 meeting, the council also heard a presentation from Capt. Travis Eynon of the

Hermiston Police Department about the role of school resources officers. The council had previously requested additional information about the program after a bill was introduced in the Oregon Legislature that would ban the practice of designating police officers to schools.

Eynon said Hermiston's three school resources officers — one for high school, one for the middle schools and one for the elementary schools — are thought of as a combination of informal teacher of safety, an informal counselor and law enforcement officer.

When the city's school resource officer program started in 1994, Eynon said, trends in policing leaned more toward "zero tolerance." If two kids were in a fight at school, for example, both would automatically be charged with a crime. Now, the department is willing to let the school district handle it through suspensions and other methods if that seems best for the cir-

cumstances, he said.

Another example Eynon used was a diversion program for minor students caught with tobacco or other substances. Students can keep their citation out of the juvenile justice system if they take an anti-drug class and don't get a second citation in the same school year.

"We don't necessarily take that zero tolerance approach anymore," he said. After the council's regular meeting, the council readjoined as the Urban Renewal Agency to approve a façade grant for The Pheasant Bar and Grill at 149 E. Main St.

Owner Cherie Bumpaus told the council that the money would be used to replace damaged awnings on the front of the building as well as other cosmetic work, such as repainting the back of the building.

Based on its scoring rubric, the planning commission suggested a 30% match for the \$21,300 project. But Bumpaus said that level of

match would take longer for the restaurant to finish saving up for the project, leaving up the unsightly metal frame where the awning was taken down. City Planner Clint Spencer noted that some of the additional work beyond the awnings was not originally part of the project when the planning commission scored it.

City Councilor Doug Primmer made a motion that the restaurant be awarded the maximum \$10,000 allowable for the project instead of 30%, and the rest of the council also voted in favor of the increased amount.

Mayor David Drotzmann said he feels "terrible" for all that restaurants have gone through in the past year during the pandemic and was glad to see the city helping one out through its façade grant program.

"I'm glad to see you're still here, I'm glad to see you're still fighting, I'm glad to see you staying in Hermiston keeping a viable business here," he said.

Recreation supervisor lauded for stepping in on shooting

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

A city employee who stepped in during a recent shooting was recognized for "actions above and beyond the normal call of duty" during the Hermiston City Council's Monday, March 8, meeting.

Brandon Artz, the city's recreation supervisor, was the previously unnamed city employee that Hermiston Police Department had praised for "quick thinking" on February 10 when police arrested Howard Califf, 46, of Hermiston on several charges, including attempted murder.

According to the initial news release from police, Califf arrived armed at a home in the 250 block of East Gladys Avenue that he had previously lived in and then been barred from by a court order. He allegedly fired several rounds inside the residence and at a male relative of the home's owner, at one point shooting the victim's dog as it attempted to defend its owner. The dog is expected to make a full recovery, police said.

The home where the incident took place is near the buildings being used as temporary city hall offices, and during Monday's city council meeting Artz said he was just leaving one of those offices when he saw a man lying down next to a dog and went to investigate.

"As I rolled down my window I said, 'Hey buddy, do you need some help?' and he said, 'Yes, somebody just shot my dog,'" Artz said.

He said he spotted a handgun lying near the scene and immediately dialed 911 as he got out of his vehicle. He then saw



City of Hermiston/Contributed Photo

Brandon Artz, right, receives a certificate of recognition for Mayor David Drotzmann, left, during a Hermiston City Council meeting on Monday, March 8, 2021.

a man coming out of the home there and kicked the gun under his vehicle so it was out of easy reach.

"I stood over the gun, and there was an altercation still with that, but I wanted to make sure that gun was safe and that nobody was going to be able to use it to harm anyone," he said.

Artz said he successfully kept the man from getting to the gun until police arrived in under two minutes and secured the scene.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said Artz's actions were a good example of a citizen seeing something out of place and following their gut feeling about it.

"Without going into detail because this is a pending matter, it could have ended a lot worse, so we absolutely appreciate Brandon's assistance," he said.

Mayor David Drotzmann presented Artz with a certificate of recognition from Drotzmann, Edmiston and City Manager Byron Smith, thanking him for his actions.

"Let it be known this 8th day of March 2021 that Brandon Artz has set an example for city employees and residents alike in how to be aware of their surroundings and help people in harm's way," the certificate stated. "His decisive actions and willingness to selflessly help resolve a dangerous situation potentially saved another person's life."

Artz said he was just grateful no one else was hurt besides the dog.

"I was lucky to be in the right place at the right time," he said.

Califf remains in the Umatilla County Jail on one count of attempted murder, two counts of unlawful use of a weapon, one count of burglary in the first degree, one count of menacing, one count of animal abuse in the second degree, one count of interfering with a peace officer, one count of reckless endangering, one count of unlawful possession of a firearm and one count of resisting arrest. His bail is listed at \$390,000.

State names new TRCI superintendent

By BRYCE DOLE
STAFF WRITER

The Oregon Department of Corrections has announced a new superintendent at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla in a press release.

Erin Reyes, a former law enforcement, state government and public safety official with more than 25 years of experience, was announced as the new superintendent on Feb. 22.

"I never would have imagined my life and career path would lead me to where I am today," Reyes said in a news release.

Reyes steps into the role after Tyler Blewett resigned in December 2020 after holding the job for a year.

Soon after, the prison

was rocked by one of the largest COVID-19 outbreaks seen in Oregon prisons since the pandemic began.

Hundreds of adults in custody and dozens of staff fell ill in December and January — more than any prison in Oregon during that time period. Fifteen inmates died.

Now, the prison, along with all other prisons in Oregon, is working to vaccinate all its AICs against COVID-19, just as Reyes assumes her role.

Reyes earned her bachelor's degree in business management and a master's degree in organizational management from the University of Phoenix, according to the release.

Her career began at the

Oregon State Police, where she worked for 18 years before joining the Oregon State Police Officers Association, the press release said.

Reyes later joined the faculty teaching criminal justice courses at the University of Phoenix.

In 2013, Reyes joined the Oregon Department of Human Services as a case-worker in the Child Protective Services Division. Three years later, she became a parole officer in Lincoln County. And in 2017, she joined the Department of Corrections, where she worked as an investigator and is currently working as the acting investigations administrator on the employee services team.

FREE

Colorectal Cancer Pre-Screening Kits Available March 15th & 29th

Colorectal cancer, the **2nd leading cause of cancer death**, can be detected early through screenings such as a colonoscopy or a Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT).

The Tri-Cities Cancer Center will provide free Fecal Immunochemical Tests (FIT) that are FDA cleared to screen for colorectal cancer at our satellite office in Hermiston. FIT is a simple, self-administered test that checks for hidden blood in your stool and provides quick results.

FREE Colorectal Cancer Screening Kits Available

Where:

Good Shepherd Medical Center,
600 Northwest 11th Street, Suite E-23, Hermiston, OR

When:

Monday, March 15th & 29th, 9am-2pm

- Open to anyone ages 45+
- Instructions on FIT
- Receive FREE FIT for at-home screening

TRI-CITIES
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March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month



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