

# Council, planning commission discuss zoning updates

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
NEWS EDITOR

A new state housing law taking effect soon is forcing adjustments to Hermiston's residential codes.

The Hermiston City Council and Planning Commission held a joint work session Monday, March 22, to discuss how to handle the zoning requirements for House Bill 2001, which in part requires duplexes to be allowed in all housing zones and prohibits cities from placing different requirements on duplexes than single family dwellings. If cities don't rewrite their code by June 30, City Planner Clint Spencer said, then the state has provided its own model code that will take effect instead.

"We've had some very spirited discussion regarding how best to implement and adopt the duplex housing standards," Spencer said of the planning commission.

The new law means duplexes will be allowed in the city's R-1 zone, where previously only single family dwellings were allowed. For minimum lot sizes and a list of other standards, the city essentially has three options under the new law, all of which were discussed during the March 22 work session. It can allow duplexes to be built to the standards currently applied to single family homes, which would allow for more crowded neighborhoods. It can start holding single family dwellings to the standards for duplexes, which would make development more expensive for developers of new single family subdivisions. Or it can create a new standard that falls somewhere in the middle.

The law was passed in an effort to provide Oregonians with more housing choices by making it easier for developers to build more types of affordable housing. But some components of the law, participants in the meeting complained, weren't written with rural communities in mind. The law states that cities cannot require developers to provide more than one parking space per unit, for example, even though

studies show rural households are more likely to have more than one vehicle.

"The legislation was written with the assumption that everyone has one and a bike and that's not the way of life in Hermiston," Spencer said.

Planning commission members told the city council that due to the June deadline, they wanted to get input before they started going down a path the city council didn't like and ran out of time to change course. Over the course of more than an hour, city councilors made suggestions and asked questions about possible solutions to address concerns about density.

Most ended the meeting by saying they would prefer to see the city maintain its standards for single family dwellings for both types of housing for now, to meet the state's deadline, but continue to study the issue and possibly make some adjustments to some standards in the future.

"Between now and June 30, the time is too crunched to make any really altering decisions," Councilor Roy Barron said.

During the regular city council meeting, which followed the work session, councilors voted to authorize City Manager Byron Smith to accept a grant from the Federal Aviation Administration to reconstruct the "apron" at the Hermiston Municipal Airport where airplanes can park once they land on the runway.

Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan said the FAA grant will cover 90% of the \$2 million project, and a \$150,000 grant from the state will help cover most of the rest of the local match of \$200,000. He said there was also rumor that as part of the latest federal stimulus package, known as the American Rescue Plan, the FAA may end up funding all its grants 100% this year.

"It's looking like our (contribution) will be quite small, perhaps zero," Morgan said.

Video of the full work session and city council meeting can be found at [youtube.com/watch?v=5ZPa9x\\_1U0o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZPa9x_1U0o).

# Fire bond on the May ballot for Hermiston voters

HERMISTON HERALD

Umatilla County Fire District No. 1 is asking voters to approve a bond that would help the fire district cover equipment, vehicle and facility upgrades.

If voters approve Measure 30-148 during the May 18 election, the 20-year bond package would raise \$13.1 million for the fire district and add 23 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value to property taxes in the district, which covers Hermiston, Stanfield and the Hat Rock area.

UCFD Fire Chief Scott Stanton said continued population growth in the area is creating new challenges for the district to continue to meet



Hermiston Herald, File

**New decals adorn the door of a Umatilla County Fire District No. 1 engine at the main station in Hermiston in 2017. The district is seeking voter approval of a \$13.1 million bond.**

the accompanying rise in demand for services.

"At peak service times, including summer fire season, outdated vehicles and

equipment become a real concern," he said. "We need safe and healthy personnel to make sure we can protect the residents and property in

western Umatilla County."

According to a news release, a citizen oversight committee would be formed to oversee use of the funds.

Projects funded by the bond would include:

- Safety apparatus for responders, such as protective equipment and portable radio systems
- Fire station renovations that would create separate quarters for male and female personnel, new roofing, alert systems and expanded vehicle bays
- Upgraded engine exhaust systems to better protect personnel health
- Upgraded fire and ambulance vehicles

# Hermiston School District shuffles administrators to new roles

HERMISTON HERALD

Hermiston School District is moving some of its administrators around to new jobs next year to fill open positions from within.

The district announced that Director of Student Services Neely McKay will serve as director of special programs. McKay had been serving in the position on an interim position during the current school year in addition to her job in student services, but will

permanently fill the director of special programs position starting July 1.

Desert View Elementary School Principal Daniel Greenough will become the new director of student services, according to the news release, drawing on his experience working as a principal of both elementary and high school students over his career.

Sandstone Middle School Assistant Principal David Melville will move to Desert View to replace

Greenough as principal. His past experience includes teaching and a position as a high school dean of students.

Joshua Browning, an instructional coach who has been training teachers in the district and working with data to help meet student

needs, has been named the new principal of Loma Vista Elementary School. The new school is scheduled to open in fall 2022, and Browning will help hire staff and plan for its opening over the course of the next year while the building is under construction.

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