



Jade McDowell/Hermiston Herald

The Hermiston Chamber of Commerce has purchased the former Pioneer Title building at 630 S Highway 395.

Hermiston Chamber moving to new building

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The Hermiston Chamber of Commerce is moving to a larger building.

The chamber announced on Friday, April 2, that it has purchased the former Pioneer Title building at 630 S. Highway 395, across from the Rodeway Inn. Chamber staff will move into the building after remodeling is complete.

New Chamber CEO Kristina Olivas said in the news release that the building, which is larger than the chamber's current offices, will be a "multifunctional" space available for community use.

"It's an exciting time for our community and our Chamber, and we are stepping forward to respond to our growing member and community needs," she said.

For about two decades, the chamber was located in the Hermiston Community Center, which chamber staff managed under a contract with the city of Hermiston. But in January 2018 the city ended its contract with the chamber and moved its own parks and recreation offices into the center. The chamber then moved into a small office space at the Cornerstone Plaza across from Safeway.

Three months later, the chamber received a \$1 million allocation from the state to build a new workforce development center and offices. It purchased property for the new building on the corner of South Highway 395 and Evelyn Ave-

nue, across from New Hope Community Church and has drafted plans for the new building. But the \$1 million won't completely cover the cost of the new building, according to the news release, and the fundraising drive planned for 2020 was put on hold during the pandemic in recognition of the struggles local businesses were facing.

Chamber President Annette Kirkpatrick said longterm plans to build the center on Evelyn Avenue haven't changed. But while the chamber waits on the new building, the former Pioneer Title building will help staff start providing workforce training and meeting space now. Kirkpatrick said the state gave the chamber permission to use part of its \$1 million grant to purchase the Pioneer Title building.

"We are excited that we can now provide the workforce training and meeting space that was key to receiving our \$1 million state grant," she said. "This facility will help meet that need."

As the chamber prepares for fundraising efforts, it has also subdivided the 2.4 acre lot on Evelyn Avenue to create two additional commercial lots it hopes to sell to generate more funding for the project. According to the news release, once the new building is complete, the chamber will also sell the Pioneer Title building to generate additional funds.

For more information on the Chamber's building projects, contact Olivas at 541-567-6151.

Snack Shack opens in Umatilla

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

A new Umatilla business will hold its grand opening on Saturday, April 10.

Courtney Talbot, owner of the Snack Shack, said the business had a soft opening on March 1, but will host its grand opening celebration on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., complete with free hot dogs and sodas, live music and prize drawings.

The Snack Shack is located at 131 Sixth St., near the bridge over the Umatilla River. The building previously served as various convenience stores throughout the years.

Talbot said the new business sells convenience



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

The Snack Shack in Umatilla will hold its grand opening on Saturday, April 10, 2021.

store items, but their inventory also includes items like fishing gear, and she serves hot breakfast every morning with breakfast burritos and sandwiches.

She said although the store has only been open a month, many people —

teenagers in particular — already know the staff as they have become "TikTok famous." The store's account on the social media app, which allows users to post short videos to music, already has more than 71,000 followers and

741,500 likes from chronicling the opening process.

"The crew has had a lot of fun with it," she said.

Talbot grew up in Hermiston before moving away from the area, and said when she and her husband moved back to the area, her husband was originally planning on opening a boat repair shop. Instead, they stumbled upon the opportunity to take over the convenience store building, which Talbot called a "happy accident."

She has previously worked as a bartender and as a real estate agent, and said a lot of those same people skills and sales skills apply to running a business.

"It's been a fun learning experience," she said.

Easterday pleads guilty to fraud

By DON JENKINS AND GEORGE PLAVEN
CAPITAL PRESS

Washington ranch co-owner Cody Easterday defrauded Tyson Foods of \$233 million and another company of \$11 million by selling more than 200,000 head of cattle that only existed on invoices, according to a plea agreement unsealed on Thursday, April 1.

Easterday, former manager of the Easterday Ranches feedlot in Pasco, Washington, pleaded guilty Wednesday, March 31, to one count of felony wire fraud and faces up to 20 years in prison.

He also faces civil charges filed March 31 by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for allegedly reporting false or misleading information to the Chicago Mercantile Exchange.

Easterday, 49, entered the plea to the criminal charge in U.S. District Court for Eastern Washington. Federal Judge Stanley Bastian in Yakima accepted the plea and set sentencing for Aug. 4. According to the plea deal, prosecutors agreed not to bring additional charges.

"For years Cody Easterday perpetrated a fraud scheme on a massive scale, increasing the cost of producing food for American families," Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicholas

L. McQuaid of the Justice Department Criminal Division said in a statement.

Efforts by the *Capital Press* to reach Cody Easterday or his attorney, Carl Oreskovich, were unsuccessful on April 1.

The CFTC alleges Cody Easterday violated the Commodity Exchange Act by reporting false or misleading information about the ranch's cattle inventory, purchases and sales to the CME, the world's largest financial derivatives exchange.

The false statements were made in 2017 and 2018 to avoid scrutiny and discipline, according to the CFTC complaint.

Easterday allegedly ran up more than \$200 million in losses over 10 years from speculative trading in the cattle and corn futures markets. To meet margin calls, Easterday allegedly defrauded one of the feedlot's biggest business partners of more than \$233 million, according to the complaint.

The complaint does not name the producer, and a CFTC spokeswoman said the commission could not identify the producer.

The complaint says the producer is based in South Dakota and operates a beef processing plant in Pasco and is "part of a family of companies that together constitute one of the largest food suppliers in the world," a profile that fits Tyson Fresh Meats, which is

based in Dakota Dunes, South Dakota.

Easterday Ranches filed for bankruptcy in February, and Cody Easterday resigned as an officer of the business, according to court records.

Cody Easterday's son, Cole Easterday, said other family members still plan to reopen Oregon's second-largest dairy near Boardman and that his father is not involved in the project.

Cole Easterday and his brothers, Clay and Cutter, own Easterday Dairy LLC. The company formed in early 2019 after the family purchased the former Lost Valley Farm for \$66.7 million.

In a statement, Cole Easterday said his father is not in management or control of the dairy enterprise.

Easterday Dairy LLC has applied for a new Confined Animal Feeding Operation, or CAFO, permit from the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Department of Environmental Quality to operate the farm with 28,300 cattle.

"I cannot comment on the situation with Easterday Ranches, as neither my brothers or I are involved in that operation," Cole Easterday said.

"Easterday Dairy LLC will continue to comply with our current permit, and will continue with our CAFO application. We are looking forward to the operation and success of our dairy."