

Council learns more about digital infrastructure plan

By **JEFF BUDLONG**
STAFF WRITER

In a special work session before the Monday, July 12, Hermiston City Council meeting, Hermiston Energy Services General Manager Nate Rivera discussed the digital infrastructure strategic plan for Hermiston.

City staff has been researching fiber broadband infrastructure options to connect city-owned facilities with the help of Strategic Networks Group, which did the state's broadband assessment and best practices study.

The work will create a digital infrastructure roadmap for the city to assist in long-term planning to maximize infrastructure investments. Currently, at least 25% — and perhaps more than 50% — of the community is underserved with broadband access, which has been highlighted during the pandemic, Rivera said.

“SNG comes in and helps community leaders and council to understand how ready a community is to undertake this type of initiative,” Rivera said. “They help us identify what the goals in the community are and the needs.”

IN OTHER BUSINESS

The council also took care of the following business:

- Unanimously adopted the Umatilla County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Councilors received the Hermiston fourth quarter investment report that saw corporate bonds increase by 3.03% to \$1,427,944. The total investable portfolio is just above \$5 million, earning a 3.23% return. Total investments are more than \$8.5 million.

Strategic Networks provided a score for Hermiston's readiness for a digital infrastructure initiative of 63%, below the recommended 71%. Rivera told the council a clear vision of what broad-

band service and digital infrastructure is needed as well as identifying where the gaps are within the community.

“Seventy-one percent means your community is ready to proceed to the next

step,” Rivera said. “We rank just underneath that. We are on the path, but there are some areas we need to work on to be successful.”

Key goals were identified as economic growth, more robust broadband access and expanded education and training opportunities. The ability to pay and maintain the initiative is a concern voiced by community leaders as well as making broadband access more robust. Seventy-eight percent of councilors listed it as a high priority, compared to 57% for community leaders.

During the city council

meeting, councilors unanimously accepted the assessment and authorized staff to proceed with a digital infrastructure economic case assessment. The eight-week process will help determine if the benefits outweigh the cost of investing in digital infrastructure. The cost of both the first and second phase, not counting staff time, is approximately \$15,000, Rivera said.

Rivera said the slow pace is deliberate to allow the city council to decide if it wants to continue with the project and keep it informed at every step.

Easterday sentencing postponed

By **DON JENKINS**
STAFF WRITER

Washington rancher Cody Easterday's sentencing for selling \$244 million worth of non-existent cattle has been pushed back to October so his attorney can recover from surgery and he can raise money for restitution by completing bankruptcy sales.



Easterday

U.S. District Judge Stanley Bastian in Richland, Washington signed an order Wednesday, July 7, rescheduling the sentencing to Oct. 5 from Aug. 4. Federal prosecutors and probation officials did not object.

Easterday pleaded guilty March 31 to one count of wire fraud. He faces up to 20 years in federal prison and has agreed to pay \$244,031,132 in restitution to Tyson Foods and an unidentified second company.

Delaying the criminal sentencing will allow time for Easterday to finish complex bankruptcy proceedings and have restitution funds available, according to his attorney, Carl Oreskovitch.

Oreskovitch also said in court documents that he had knee-replacement surgery in mid-June, hampering his ability to prepare for

the August sentencing.

Easterday billed Tyson and the other company for buying and feeding cattle that didn't exist and spent much of the proceeds to cover losses he racked up on commodity futures contracts, according to court records.

Easterday's two companies, Easterday Ranches and Easterday Farms, are going through bankruptcy. Farmland Reserve Inc., owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, submitted the high bid of \$209 million for several Easterday properties in the Columbia Basin.

A hearing is set for July 14 in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for Eastern Washington to finalize the sale.

Boardman gets the first Think Big Space on the West Coast

HERMISTON HERALD

BOARDMAN — The Port of Morrow's Sustainable Agriculture and Energy Center in Boardman has been selected as the site of a new AWS Think Big Space.

The new K-6 classroom and school visitation program is funded by Amazon Web Services and will be overseen by the Morrow County School District. An AWS Think Big Space is an enhanced classroom for students to explore and cultivate science, technology, engineering and math interests with labs that encourage a hands-on approach where students think big to solve real world problems.

This collaboration brings together regional partners that include early childhood education, post-secondary schools, and community sponsors.

The AWS Think Big Space serves as an “educational incubator” utilizing cloud comput-

ing, AWS technology and Amazon's Leadership Principles. Students and teachers are encouraged to “Think Big” as they explore cloud computing to solve problems using creativity and imagination. The AWS Think

self-directed learning. AWS selected the SAGE Center as the first AWS Think Big Space on the West Coast. Ryan Neal, Port of Morrow executive director, is looking forward to expanding opportunities for students.

“THIS PARTNERSHIP IS AN INVESTMENT IN OUR YOUTH AND THEIR FUTURE.”

— Ryan Neal, Port of Morrow executive director

Big Space is an integrated environment where everything from the furniture to technology and curriculum work together to support interactive hands-on learning. The space prioritizes personalized learning to engage students of all ages, interests and abilities.

Morrow County School District is hiring an instructional lead that will oversee the new space. The instructional lead will implement a practice of

“This partnership is an investment in our youth and their future,” he said. “We see the AWS Think Big Space as a catalyst for supporting students as they develop new solutions and ideas that will make our world a better place.”

Construction is underway at the SAGE Center where the new AWS Think Big Space will be located. It is expected to open in the fourth quarter of 2021.

3 county fire districts receive grants

HERMISTON HERALD

Umatilla County Fire District No. 1 is one of three local fire districts to receive \$3,000 each in matching internship grants from the Special Districts Association of Oregon.

The association in a press release Wednesday, July 7, announced it awarded more than \$65,000 total to 23 special districts to help them secure summer internships. In addition to Umatilla County Fire District No. 1, the Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District and Pilot Rock Fire District also

received grants.

Special districts deliver much needed services to their communities while supporting the local workforce, according to the press release. In addition, many districts offer summer internships to college-level students in their area who are seeking to learn more about local government careers.

For consideration of a matching grant to support an internship, districts must submit applications outlining the details of their project, the benefits it will bring to the district and how they

will use a summer intern.

A project that will cost \$6,000 or more is eligible for a grant of \$3,000. The district also must provide the matching funds.

At the end of the summer, recipients must submit a project summary and receipts to the Special Districts Association of Oregon.

The Special Districts Association of Oregon represents more than 920 special districts in Oregon, assisting them in providing cost-effective and efficient public services. For more information, visit www.sdao.com.

IN BRIEF

Cool Rides celebrates 25th annual car show

Gordon Smith drove away with the best of show award during the 25th annual Cool Rides Car Show with his 1933 Ford Vicky. Hosted by the Hermiston Classics Car Club, nearly 150 vehicles were entered in the July 10 event, which was held at McKenzie Park in Hermiston.

Other special awards went to the Hamilton family (people's choice); Jim Morris (Andy Anderson Memorial Award); and Bob Burke (Mike Monroe Memorial Award). In addition, awards were given in more than a dozen categories — based on year, stock or modified, cars and trucks, import, work in progress and the police and fire chief awards.

The Hermiston Classics Car Club includes local car enthusiasts, who get together to share their love of all things vehicle-related. Although the club's name includes the term “classics,” anyone who has a passion for cars and trucks is invited to join. In addition to planning their yearly show, during the spring/summer months members of the group often hang out on Friday nights at Les Schwab Tire Center in Hermiston.

For updates on club meetings and activities, visit www.facebook.com/HermistonClassicsCarClub or www.hermistonclassicscarclub.com. For questions, contact 541-571-0141 or hermistonclassicscarclub@gmail.com.

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Celebration of Life Service for LELA COLLIER

Saturday, July 24th • 11:00am
Hermiston First United Methodist Church
191 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston

Lela, age 95, passed away at her home on November 13, 2020. Lela's family would be most grateful if you wear a mask while attending the short ceremony.

AGAPE HOUSE GOLF TOURNAMENT

July 31, 8 a.m.

Big River Golf Course, Umatilla
Registration deadline is July 24

Registration forms at www.agapehousehermiston.org and at Agape House, 500 W. Harper Avenue.

Help sustain the food, clothing, and housing programs provided by Eastern Oregon Mission.



Title Sponsors: UEC UMATILLA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, PW LOBBY GROUP



Oregon Department of Transportation

7/9/2021

PROJECT UPDATE – U.S. 395 nighttime paving starts July 18

U.S. 395: SE 4th – I-84 (Hermiston/Stanfield)
Paving and ADA upgrades

Work is continuing on a major paving and ADA curb ramp upgrade project along U.S. 395 in the Hermiston and Stanfield area. Curb ramp upgrades to meet current ADA standards are ongoing.

Nighttime paving of the highway between I-84 Exit 188 south of Stanfield and SE 4th Street in Hermiston will begin July 18.

U.S. 395 Paving: Work begins Sunday evening, July 18 at 7 p.m. Night paving will occur 7 p.m. through 7 a.m., Sunday nights through Friday mornings.

Paving will begin just north of the Stanfield High School (near milepost 10) and move north to the ODOT maintenance station on U.S. 395 (milepost 7). **Paving activities will be postponed during the Umatilla County Fair, after which they will resume along the rest of the project limits.**

ADA curb ramp upgrades: Expect construction activities in Stanfield at Ball, Tuttle, Furnish, Wood and Roosevelt streets. Curb ramp work in Hermiston will begin later this summer.

Lane reconfiguration in Stanfield: New highway striping will result in traffic pattern changes that include one northbound and one southbound lane, a dedicated center turn lane, plus new parking strip and bicycle lanes on both sides of the road. Temporary striping was applied July 9 and will become the permanent configuration. It will create a safer downtown area by helping slow motorists down, enhancing bike routes and parking, and reducing the number of traffic lanes that pedestrians have to cross.

Traffic impacts: Expect minor delays and single lane closures. Advance warning signs will be in place to alert drivers of work. Slow down in all work zones and watch for crews, equipment and traffic pattern changes. All construction expected to finish by end of October. Work is dependent on weather conditions and dates are subject to change.

For more information, visit our project webpage at <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/projects/pages/project-details.aspx?project=20461>

More information: Contact ODOT Public Information Officer **Tom Strandberg 541-963-1330**, thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us
For eastern Oregon highway construction project information www.tinyurl.com/odot-region5
Traffic information www.TripCheck.com
We greatly appreciate your support and patience during this project that is improving safety and will help preserve and extend the useful life of the highway surface.

THANK YOU!