

Silage fire burns in southwest Hermiston

Department says the fire is not hostile

Hermiston Herald

The silage fire burning in southwest Hermiston continues to garner attention from Umatilla County Fire District No. 1.

The district reported there is little it can do to extinguish the silage pile that has been burning for more than a week but the property owner is working toward that end and has trucked in water and hauled off loads of silage.

Umatilla County Fire District No. 1, in a press release reported it responded to the fire the morning of Dec. 8. Crews found a large pile of corn silage that had self heated and began to openly burn. Firefighters extinguished the flames and returned several times after the fire flared up.

“These types of fires occur when organic materials begin to break down,” the press release explained, which releases heat, and in the right conditions can lead to smol-

dering and open combustion. The fire district said this pile has all the components for this type of fire — moist organic material, decomposition, compression and ventilation. And recent high winds provided the ventilation to bring the combustion to the surface of the pile.

“This fire is a large smoldering pile of organic material that requires the use of heavy equipment and water to complete extinguishment,” according to the press release. “To simply flow water on this type of fire as has been suggested by some citizens, will do nothing to mitigate the smoke in a timely fashion.”

The district compared the fire to a fire in a trash can inside a residence. Flowing water on the roof of the structure would have no effect on putting out the fire in the can.

“This is not a hostile fire at this time,” the press release continued. “We are well aware of the impact that the smoke is having on the community, and the land owner is taking all the required actions to complete extinguishment of this fire.”

Those actions include the use of water trucks and heavy equipment. The district explained it lacks that kind of heavy equipment and does not have operators to handle it.

The press release also explained this fire does not fall under the district’s open burning regulations and is unintentional. It also is burning an open pit and is not creating a hazard to anything surrounding that area. Therefore, the property owner is responsible for extinguishing the fire.

In a press release Monday, Dec. 20, Umatilla County Fire District No. 1 reported it conducted a follow-up inspection on the silage pile fire, and the property owner is trucking in water and hauled off 15 loads of silage during the weekend.

Umatilla County Fire District No. 1 also stated it has been in contact with the city of Hermiston, Umatilla County Smoke Management and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality regarding the fire and will continue to monitor the situation until the work is complete.

Padawans assemble at library



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald

Attendees at the Hermiston Public Library’s Teen Star Wars Party answer trivia questions on Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2021. In addition to the trivia, the young Jedi Knights played games and ate snacks.

HHS students win fourth Congressional App Challenge for district

Hermiston Herald

Four Hermiston High School students recently won the 2021 Congressional App Challenge for Oregon’s District 2. Rami Hozi, Cordell Patrick, Blake Wickers and Zeferino Araiza were notified of their award by Congressman Cliff Bentz’s office. The Hermiston students are studying computer science.

The students created the Emergency App, which allows anyone, at any time, to access emergency services such as phone numbers, location, contacts and a map.

The premise stemmed from an idea to give people an easy

and convenient way to access some of the most popular safety and emergency services all in one app. Using the app, a person can dial any number from the provided list of emergency numbers. The user can get an exact location with a button click, showing data such as latitude, longitude and address, regardless of location. Also, it is possible, through the app, to connect with emergency contacts and access a map that includes nearby emergency locations.

“The Emergency App has been in the works for a long time,” said Robert Theriault, HHS computer science teacher. “The students thought of the

app last year and have been planning the best way to implement the app. It was decided early on that they wanted it on both Android and iOS so a majority of mobile users could utilize the app. However, this meant that they needed to learn two interfaces to get both systems working. It was one of the largest endeavors I have seen in the last six years at Hermiston High School.”

The students are invited to attend the House of Code next spring.

The Congressional App Challenge mission is to inspire, include and innovate efforts around STEM, coding, and computer science education.

Hermiston man arrested following shooting death

Hermiston Herald

A Hermiston man is in jail after a shooting early Sunday, Dec. 19, left another man dead.

Hermiston police at about 1:24 a.m. responded to a report of a man who may have been shot in the parking lot of Metro Mart, 1120 W. Highland Ave., according to information Hermiston police Capt. Travis Eynon posted on the department’s Facebook page. Officers arrived and found Kevin James Hines, 27, of Hermiston, unresponsive and not breathing.

Umatilla County Fire District No. 1 medics arrived shortly after and “worked valiantly” on Hines, according to the post, but he died at the scene.

The local major crimes team responded with detectives from Boardman Police Department, Morrow County Sheriff’s

Office, Umatilla Police Department, Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office, Pendleton Police Department and Umatilla Tribal Police Department. Those detectives and Hermiston police detectives and officers worked through the night investigating the crime.

Police at about 8:05 a.m. arrested Ethan Matthew Bowe, 23, at his Hermiston residence and booked him into the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, for first-degree murder, unlawful use of a weapon and tampering with evidence.

“This was not random,” according to Eynon’s post, “and there is no reason to believe anyone else is in danger.”

Bowe remains in jail in lieu of \$15,000 bail. He has a probable cause preliminary hearing Dec. 28, 8:15 a.m. in Courtroom 5 in the Umatilla County Circuit Court, Hermiston.

Hermiston bumps hangar rents, OKs grant for trail project

By PHIL WRIGHT

Hermiston Herald

Renting space at Hermiston Municipal Airport’s open hangar is getting more expensive.

The Hermiston City Council during its meeting Monday, Dec. 13, voted 8-0 to raise the rental rate for “open T-hangars” from \$65 per month to \$100 per month.

The move came after the city’s Airport Advisory Committee on Dec. 1 asked the council to increase the rents. Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan in a memo to council noted, “It is unknown when the last time was that this rate was adjusted, but it is assumed to be at least 20 years.”

The open hangar has space for 10 planes and has seven paying tenants, according to the memo, and

has had seven to 10 tenants for the past several years. The city estimated the higher rent will increase annual hangar revenue at the airport by an additional \$2,900 to \$4,200 per year.

The city will place the additional revenue into the Airport’s Hangar Construction Reserve Fund, although the city is uncertain about building new hangars at the airport.

“It may make sense to simply demolish the existing open hangar Building No. 1 and replace it with an enclosed facility,” the memo stated.

The council also gave unanimous approval for the city to accept a grant of \$266,498 from Oregon Department of Transportation’s Oregon Community Paths program to build the Belt Park Greenway Trail from Southwest Seventh

Street to the Buttercreek Apartments at the end of West Juniper Avenue. The project also will improve the trail, making it accessible to wheelchairs and scooters.

The trail — 2,822 feet long — will meander along Belt Creek, according to a memo from Parks and Recreation Director Brandon Artz, with shade, rest areas, doggy waste bags and garbage cans, which the city will maintain.

The total cost of the project is approximately \$297,000. The city will be responsible for the remainder minus the grant amount.

In other business, the council voted 8-0 to approve joining two class action lawsuit settlements resolving opioid litigation. Under the terms of the deals, McKesson, Cardinal Health and Amerisource-

Bergen will pay a maximum of \$21 billion over 18 years, and Johnson & Johnson will pay up to \$5 billion over no more than nine years. Approximately \$22.8 billion in the proceeds go to state and local subdivisions.

That ekes out to about \$250,000 for Hermiston during the span, Mayor Dave Drotzmann said. City Manager Byron Smith agreed that was not much money to start an opioid treatment program, but the city can look to partner with other local governments also getting a share and pool resources.

And the council approved updating city code to make unlawfully applying graffiti a violation with a penalty of up to 100 hours of community service. The new language goes into effect 30 days after passage.

At the top of the meeting, the city took a moment to present a certificate of recognition to John Perkins, who for 18 years has portrayed Santa Claus at local events. Perkins, who suffers from late-stage pan-

creas cancer, was on hand to accept the recognition, including a plaque from Artz.

Perkins, a Hermiston native, thanked the city and donated the green chair he has used as Santa to the city.

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