

Schools:

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growing and the district would otherwise have difficulty keeping up with Hermiston's population. Already, as she pointed out, the current Rocky Heights has five modular buildings, each of which house five classrooms a piece.

No modulars are planned for the new buildings, though, she said.

The addition of these new schools even will allow Highland Hills Elementary School to get rid of its modular buildings. The new schools will be able to accept students who are overflowing Highland Hills.

She added the new buildings will offer greater security, as each school will keep its students under a single roof. People entering the buildings will have to pass through vestibules, where they will be met by office staff.

Hearing that students will benefit from his work, Aparicio said he felt glad. He has worked on many different projects, but most are not as satisfying as schools, he said. According to the Wenaha manager, building a school is special because it serves children and their development.

"There's an extra incentive to deliver a good product," he said. "There's nothing like seeing the smiles on children when they step into their new building."

Fowler shared this sentiment. The Kirby Nagelhout superintendent said this project is exciting, as it is his first elementary school construction, and he is happy to be working for the benefit of young students.

He said many Rocky Heights students, who are studying out of the old building, adjacent to the construction site, often check out the ongoing work. They stand outside the fence, and watch their new school take form, he said.

"It's gratifying to see the kids, playing next door, peeking through the fence and watching it come up," he said.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Framing nears completion Jan. 12, 2022, on the library at the new Rocky Heights Elementary School, Hermiston.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Construction crews work Jan. 12, 2022, on the site of the new Rocky Heights Elementary School, Hermiston.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

The Hermiston Butte is visible Jan. 12, 2022, through the front windows of what will be the new Rocky Heights Elementary School, Hermiston.

The teachers, too, he said, have a gander at the work and also seem excited. As often he does not even meet the people who take possession of his projects, he said this one is special; he gets to see his customers.

The Hermiston schools superintendent said Rocky Heights staff have toured the new building several times and seem to like what they have seen.

Standing in the princi-

pal's future office, Aparicio pointed out one of the reasons why the school's principal might be enthusiastic; it has a full view of the Hermiston Butte, across the street, in Butte Park.

Josh Browning, Loma Vista principal, likely is happy also, Mooney said, because he will soon have an office.

"He's just been going from place to place, itinerant," she said.

The challenges of construction

Life is not just sunshine and rainbows, Aparicio and Fowler said. Sure, they said, people are excited, but this does not mean work has advanced without challenges.

This year's snowfall made additional work; laborers had to remove snow from parts of the project that were uncovered and sub-

ject to the elements. Aparicio and Fowler, however, stopped short of saying the snowfall created a delay in the project. Rather, they said, the snowfall forced them to redirect labor to other tasks.

Snow and cold weather have not been their biggest worry, they said. They said material acquisition was a much bigger concern, but they had a solution to this problem.

According to Aparicio, he has heard from some distributors, contractors and suppliers who have struggled to secure materials on other projects. Some things, which would ordinarily take six weeks, are delayed by up to three months, he said.

"Our team worked frantically to get what we needed before anyone else got to it," Fowler said, and they were able to "escape the volatility of the market" through early purchasing.

"Procurement is complicated at this time," Aparicio said. "We jumped on stuff way earlier than we would've to make sure that we had it when we needed it."

Some of these things have been stored on site and are moved as needed.

"We'd rather deal with the issue of moving things around that is already here as opposed to not having it when we need it," he said.

Moving on in

Mooney said she has concerned herself with obtaining extra staff for the schools. In addition to the new principal, new custodial staff and secretaries will be needed. Some staff, including teachers, will transfer to the new schools.

Mooney calls the movement of staff, classes and students a "shuffling around the district." Some students, who are attending one school, will be moved to new schools, as new lines are drawn within the district.

Students who will enter the new schools are in for a treat, according to Aparicio. Exposed wood, polished concrete floors, a waved roofline and wide windows will add to the aesthetics, he said.

"They're going to be beautiful," Aparicio said of the schools.

Mooney added her own description — "amazing." She said the schools will host tours for the public prior to their opening, if their schedule permits.

Port:

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solution that benefits local farmers, port industries and the region as a whole.

"The Port of Morrow has been working collaboratively with DEQ on the content of this action," Neal said. "We look forward to jointly developing a resolution."

High levels of nitrates in drinking water are linked with serious health concerns, particularly for babies and pregnant women.

Groundwater is used as a primary source of drinking water across the basin, which spans northern Umatilla and Morrow counties — including the cities of

Hermiston, Boardman, Irrigon, Stanfield and Echo.

Historically, the sources of groundwater contamination in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area are fertilizer used on irrigated farmland, confined animal feeding operations, livestock pastures, food processing wastewater and septic systems, according to DEQ's press release.

"The existing nitrate contamination in the basin's groundwater means everyone in the region has to do their part to reduce this contamination," Feldon said.

DEQ also alleges the port failed to monitor nitrogen at application sites on 121 separate occasions each year from 2018-2020.

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Instead, he said, people should choose to love one another. When people follow the path of love, instead of bigotry and hate, they can unite.

Continuing the work

There is a lot of work left to do if we are to move forward together in a just world, according to Rome in a discussion before the event. The Hermiston Cultural Awareness Coalition, formerly the Black International Awareness Club, is one of the longest existing cultural diversity organizations within the Hermiston and surrounding communities, he said. He added the purpose of the committee is to promote the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and to support diversity and equality in the greater Hermiston Oregon community.

"It was started as a grassroots movement in 2000 with community members from all walks of life — clergy,

small business owners, farmers, educators, community advocates and concerned community members that wanted to raise awareness and concern around the need for more diversity and equality within rural Eastern Oregon," he said

Specifically, he said he takes to heart the following quote from King: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is 'What are you doing for others?'"

Rome credited HCAC's advocacy for encouraging the city of Hermiston to formally recognize MLK Day in 2000. He said he believes his nation, state and local community have made progress toward equality, but "we still have a long way to go for equal rights and equality for all" and he keeps King's words in mind.

"I truly believe if we take Dr. King's words to heart and reach out to all our neighbors, and not just to the neighbors that look and talk like us," Rome said, "we are one step closer in seeing Dr. King's dream come true."



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Pictured above (l to r): Stacy Hunter, Associate Commercial Relationship Manager; Juliann Dodd, SVP/Commercial Banking Team Leader; Steve Campbell, VP/ Senior Commercial Relationship Manager