

## Port director's death called a 'tough loss'

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
EO Media Group

Ryan Neal, executive director of the Port of Morrow in Boardman, has died.

Neal, 40, suffered a fatal heart attack Monday, Jan. 17, while at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center in Portland, said Don Russell, a Morrow County commissioner and family friend.

"It's a tough loss for the community, for his family and really for the region as a whole," Russell said. "He's going to be hard to replace."

The Port of Morrow in a press release reported Neal also had COVID-19.

Russell described Neal as "a brilliant guy," who cared deeply about Eastern Oregon and his hometown of Boardman. He took charge of the Port of Morrow — Oregon's second-largest

port district — in 2018, following in the footsteps of his father, Gary Neal, who was the port's director for 30 years before retiring.

The port operates several industrial parks in Morrow County, including the Boardman Industrial Park along the Columbia River near Boardman, which is home to major food processing companies such as Lamb Weston, Tillamook Cheese, Oregon Potato Co. and Boardman Foods.

According to the port's own data, its businesses totaled 8,452 permanent jobs and \$2.77 billion in total economic output in 2017. Morrow County boasts the third-highest average wages statewide, Russell said, in large thanks to economic development at the port.

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## BMCC hoping to boost enrollment

Pendleton college offers new coursework and more study options in effort to reverse decline

By **ERICK PETERSON**  
Hermiston Herald

Blue Mountain Community College has changed a great deal, according to school administrators. Its students are adjusting, too.

Eric Hoyos, 18, of Umatilla, is one of those students who has had to make difficult adjustments. In his last two years of studies at Umatilla High School, he had to grow accustomed to online studies. When the pandemic closed his school, his in-person classes switched to online ones.

"I feel kind of odd talking to a screen," he said.

This being the case, he struggled with working online with teachers, which led to a drop in his grades. His usual A and B grades fell, and he had difficulty maintaining a 3.0 GPA, he said.

In time, however, he got used to his online classes, and he was able to move on to studies at BMCC, his current school. Hoyos has completed two terms at the college, and is doing well, he said. He has even taken a hybrid class, in which he studied online and in person, and he felt good about it, he said.

Hoyos said he wants to become a nurse because he has seen a need for people in health care. When his mother became sick with COVID-19 and was hospitalized, he witnessed first-hand the importance of nurses. He said he will complete studies to accomplish his goal, even if he must do all his courses online.

Hoyo's example is typical, said Nayeli Contreras, director of Blue Mountain's Hermiston center. Like Hoyos, many other students are getting used to studying online, she said.

"Since COVID forced everyone to go online, (students) have become much

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Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald  
**Patrick Hunt measures brisket for a sandwich Friday, Jan. 21, 2022, in his Southern Twain BBQ food truck at the Hermiston Food Pod.**

## Hermiston food pod opens with two trucks, more expected

By **ERICK PETERSON**  
Hermiston Herald

Customers walked up to his popular food truck, but they seem ready to do cartwheels instead, according to Patrick Hunt, owner of Southern Twain BBQ.

Hunt said he is as happy as his customers — thrilled to be dishing out smokehouse nachos, hickory sausages, sweet tea and other delicacies once more.

Hunt oversees the Hermiston Food Pod, 240 S.W. Third St., where he also runs his business. The pod is in a lot across the street from the post office. It was closed at the start of October for improvements that would make it more attractive for additional restaurants.

At the pod's "soft opening," Tuesday, Jan. 18, there were only two food trucks. Hunt, however, said there will be more. In a couple of weeks, food trucks will be "trickling in," he said. In the coming months, according to Hunt, the lot will fill with eight trucks.

Vendors already are lining up, he said. Mexican food, Asian food, hamburgers and more will all be available.

Clint Spencer, Hermiston planning director, is among the city employees who have been working on this project. Spencer said the city created eight indi-



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald  
**Mayra Torres packs orders Friday, Jan. 21, 2022, at the El Salvadoreno No. 2 food truck at the Hermiston Food Pod.**

vidual water, sewage and electrical connections to handle trucks.

"It took longer to do the work than we thought it would, running through the contractor," Spencer said.

The contractor, according to Spencer, did not have time on his calendar to do the work and have it ready any earlier than its January opening.

Hunt said a shortage of food inspectors has delayed the other vendors. Additional food trucks would be

operating now if they could have received clearance, he said.

"The way this works is that (vendors) turn in their packet, they review it, it goes to the fire department, everybody reviews it to make sure we're safe," Hunt said.

Hunt applauded his neighboring food truck for completing all the necessary paperwork to open alongside his. Dolores Amaya, owner of El Salvadoreno No. 2, is a veteran of

the food truck business. She said she started her trucks in 2010. In addition to the truck she uses in Hermiston, she operates another in Boardman.

Amaya offers food from her native El Salvador. Pupusas, the national food of her country, is a popular item at her restaurant, she said. Also, she sells tacos, tortas, burritos and more. She said business is good in Boardman and she feels

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## Power companies announce new deal on B2 H line

Hermiston Herald

Idaho Power, PacifiCorp and the Bonneville Power Administration have reached a non-binding agreement on the massive Boardman to Hemingway transmission line.

The BPA in a press release Jan. 19, announced the agreement clarifies and updates roles and responsibilities for the B2H project.

"The proposed agreement is an important step for this 500-kilovolt, 290-mile transmission line, which would deliver 1,000 megawatts of reliable, affordable power in each direction between the Pacific Northwest and Mountain west," accord-



Hermiston Herald, File

**A crew works on a transmission line tower outside Boardman in November 2017. The Bonneville Power Administration on Jan. 19, 2022, announced it, Idaho Power and PacifiCorp have a new deal on the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line that will run through Eastern Oregon.**

ing to the press release.

Under the new deal, Idaho Power and PacifiCorp will jointly own the

B2H transmission line, with PacifiCorp owning 55% and Idaho Power owning 45%.

Idaho Power will acquire an ownership interest in PacifiCorp transmission lines and other equipment between eastern Idaho and the Four Corners Substation in northwest New Mexico. B2H and those acquisitions amplify Idaho Power's connections to key energy markets that will help the company meet rapidly growing customer demand.

The Bonneville Power Administration will transfer its ownership interest in B2H to Idaho Power and will not participate in construction or have any ownership interest in the transmission line project.

Facilities PacifiCorp uses BPA's customers in and around

southeast Idaho will be transferred to Idaho Power. BPA will acquire transmission service over Idaho Power's transmission system, including the newly constructed B2H, to serve public utility customers in Idaho, Wyoming and Montana.

More information about BPA's effort to serve these customers and its public process to consider the agreement is available in BPA's letter to the region.

PacifiCorp will acquire Idaho Power transmission assets across southern Idaho that, combined with its majority stake in Boardman-Hemingway, will increase its contiguous power transfer capability between its west-

ern and eastern systems, and will acquire additional transmission service from BPA to enable it to serve its growing customer base in central Oregon.

With the non-binding term sheet developed, the three organizations move into a negotiation phase to finalize the agreements and seek regulatory approval. Concurrent with this press release, BPA is issuing a letter to its regional stakeholders and customers that outlines the proposal, describes the background and explains the process for engaging with BPA on this topic.

Construction of the line is to begin in 2023, and B2H is anticipated to come online in 2026.

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