

Manor:

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“Two-thousand dollars will cover most security deposits in this area and moving costs, but it won’t help with those families who are in need of affordable housing but don’t quite make the margin for low-income housing,” he said.

Another tenant, who would not identify herself, said she lived there for three years and also expressed worry for others. She said she knows of tenants who have lived at the apartments for more than 30 years.

“There is nothing to rent here (in Hermiston),” she said. “We are all wondering what to do. I am beside myself as I am retired on fixed income and work three days at a little store just to afford my meds.”



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Residents at Highland Manor, 1205 W. Highland Ave., Hermiston, received notices Feb. 2, 2022, that new owner, Clover Housing Group LLC will be vacating the complex to allow for renovations.

Mike Atkinson, owner of Clover Housing, said he sympathizes with his tenants, but he has big plans for

the apartments.

“They’re old apartments,” he said. “They need a facelift.”

Renovations include upgrades to heating, ventilation and air conditioning, he said, and new carpeting.

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Mike Atkinson, owner of Clover Housing

Atkinson said the apartments are far from condemnable, even without the renovations. Still, he said, he was only able to find one insurance company to insure the apartments as they are now.

He said his plan is to give people opportunities to leave. In an ideal situation, he said, all or most tenants would leave and then renovations would begin. Renovating an empty complex, he said, would be smoother and more cost-effective.

Atkinson added he had no timetable on reopening the apartments following their renovation. Once

he did open them, though, he said he intends to charge rents that are a bit below market value.

“I understand that this is difficult for tenants,” Atkinson said. “All I’m doing right now is taking the temperature.”

He added he is waiting to see the response from his tenants. It is possible, he said, they would “regroup” if the tenants decided to not leave the apartments.

“On March 1, I’m going to look back and see how that was received by the tenants and what happened, and develop a plan at that time,” he said.

Power:

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Idaho Power claims surveys necessary

Sven Berg is Idaho Power’s communications specialist. He said permitting on the project will conclude sometime this year, and geotechnical, cultural and biological surveys are underway now. These surveys will reveal important information, he said, such as area wildlife and archaeological sites.

“We’re working with landowners along the route to try to negotiate rights of entry to their property and easements,” he said.

These easements would give Idaho Power and its partner on B2H, PacifiCorp, rights to land use on properties where they may someday build a structure, Berg explained.

He said there are 98 parcels that 47 landowners own where the companies need right of entry. These include not just properties on the route, but ones that need to be crossed to access other lands, public and private, he said.

There will be hundreds of towers, and the entire line will be over ground, Berg said. He described them as steel lattice and H-frame structures. The steel lattice structures average 140 feet tall with a 40-foot-by-40-foot footprint. The steel H-frame towers are, on average, 100 feet tall, he said.

These are large structures, he said, but landowners will be able to farm under and around them. He added there are no safety concerns from electromagnetic frequencies, as long as you are not “right up on them.”

The power companies would make one-time payments to the landowners as compensation, Berg said.

Importance of the project

“From our perspective, we see this as absolutely crucial to what we call the future and maintaining our tradition of reliable and affordable energy,” he said.

He said the country will require “greater and more robust” transmission connec-



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Richard Hemphill opens the gate to Parker Road on Feb. 2, 2022, to access a 1,000-acre parcel of his family’s property where the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line will pass near Pilot Rock.

tions between regions and intra-regionally. He said this will be necessary if we are to increase the amount of clean energy moving from producers to users.

Power, he said, will connect to other grids, extending as far as Arizona.

“That energy can move far and wide, and it can go the other way, too,” Berg said.

And B2H could be the transmission line that allows power from Phoenix, Arizona, on a sunny day, to reach Portland when it is needed.

The line will take roughly three years to build, Berg said. Construction could start in 2023, and will bring new jobs and business to areas all along the route. He added it will increase cash property revenue to counties on the route.

B2H affects ranchers but helps data centers

Jim Doherty, chair of the Morrow County Board of Commissioners, expressed mixed feelings about the line. He said he has spoken with landowners, including cattle ranchers, to hear their anger. For himself, he said, he also has negative feelings.

“Generally, I’m kind of opposed to it,” he said.

Adding tons of steel and wires across Mother Earth is not ideal, he said, but the construction of the Longhorn substation, starting point for the line, is an \$80-\$100 million project and would make possible new area businesses.

“There are a lot of things looking for that power and

needing it, and there’s a shorter and shorter supply down here all the while,” Doherty said.

He could get behind the project, he said, if the route could be altered to do less harm to local landowners.

“We’re taking one for the team, and those cattle ranchers on the century farms that built Morrow County, they’re really taking one for the team,” the commissioner said.

He said the county board, at this point, lacks leverage in this situation. He said he would like to see the route changed or

landowners receive a larger payout for easements, but the county does not have power over this. He said a previous Morrow County Board of Commissioners may have been able to do something, but the opportunity has passed.

Feeling powerless in face of power line

On the land Idaho Power soon will survey for the transmission line, the Hemphills farm wheat. That property alone is 1,000 acres, they said. Jean Hemphill said her family



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Jean Hemphill flips through a folder of her information on the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line Feb. 2, 2022, at her home near Pilot Rock.

has owned that particular piece of land since 1917.

One family member died of the flu epidemic of the early 20th century, she recalled, and others lived on the land without indoor plumbing. This is a land that has a lot of history, she said. Some of the history even predates her family’s ownership. One landmark on the property is a stone structure, which may have been made during conflicts with Native Americans, she said.

And though the Hemphills have many more acres in the area, they said they are far from royalty. Just as the land has a history of people strug-

gling, the Hemphills said they have their own concerns. Rising costs for seed, fuel and chemicals have made business difficult, they said.

Planned construction of B2H adds to their worries. They said they are upset about work disrupting their farming. Also, they are bothered by the possibilities that towers will trouble farming and wildlife, long after they receive their one-time payment.

She believes the line is inevitable, and she and her husband are powerless compared to more powerful groups that are set on the line.



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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



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