

ADVISER

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Following the SHIP discussion, the rest of the meeting was relatively tranquil. The council passed a resolution to authorize issuance of pension obligation bonds. Among other business, the council agreed to establish a committee to implement a Hermiston 2040 oversight committee, and they heard the monthly financial report.

Doherty's report

Doherty said she appreciated the diversity in the council. Hermiston's councilors appear to have varied opinions, she said, but seem to work together well for the betterment of their town. She added the meeting presented topics that were difficult to understand but concepts were explained well.

"It was approachable," she said.

She also said she appreciated the community members who came to the meeting to speak, too.

"There were heated moments, but that was good," she said. "It's good that they were passionate."



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald

Youth adviser Elizabeth Doherty, far right, attends the Hermiston City Council meeting Tuesday, March 29, 2022. This was the first council meeting to have a youth adviser.

By coming to the meeting, and voicing their frustrations, they were able to bring about change. This is how things should be, she said.

As members packed up their notebooks and began leaving, she said she was very happy for this experience. She said she sees a possible future in which she

leaves town for college and then returns to run for and join the city council.

"Hermiston is a good community," she said. "It's a great place to start your

community life."

She expressed gratitude to the council, the city manager and her teacher, Aaron Davis, for helping to make this experience possible for

her and other students. She said she and her peers will have a lot to offer in future weeks.

Drotzmann complimented Doherty, saying he has known her since she was a little girl. She was a server at his daughter's wedding, and he has been a family friend for several years, he said.

"She is a phenomenal young lady," he said.

Smith said she is a positive influence in Hermiston and a good person to join this new group of youth advisers. He added that other Oregon cities, including Hillsboro and Happy Valley, already instituted youth advisers. It has worked well in other communities, he said, which is why he wanted to help create one in Hermiston.

The mayor added he hopes the council can continue to engage young people to give them the role they deserve in shaping the town's future.

Councilor Phillip Spicerkuhn agreed, saying he, too, wants to see young people get involved in the city's affairs.

Happy Birthday to Lilly



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald

Lilly Alarcon-Strong smiles at the Hermiston City Council meeting, Monday, March 28, 2022, as attendees sang "Happy Birthday" to her. It was the first time, to anyone's recollection, that the song had been sang to anyone in a Hermiston City Council meeting. She was gifted with flowers, too.

PRISON

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Hanna largely represented himself from his initial filing last fall until a hearing on March 9, when attorney Juan Chavez helped him argue the case before Beckerman.

"Mr. Hanna filed for this injunction back in October of 2021 asking ODOC to just comply with the same mask order that he follows," Chavez said in a written statement after the March 21 ruling.

"While waiting for this order, he caught COVID in January 2022. He and so many other prisoners have had to sit and wait for ODOC to do the right thing. It's clear and unfortunate that the federal gov-

ernment is the only actor to provide any oversight of the agency."

Beckerman also cited examples from other cases where DOC officials described poor or improper masking at state prisons.

Brad Cain, the former superintendent at the Snake River Correctional Institution, was deposed by Chavez on Dec. 22, 2020 as part of a separate case.

"Were you told why some staff members didn't want to wear a mask?" Chavez asked.

"I've heard people's opinions on it," Cain replied. "Some people didn't believe in it. They just didn't believe in it. They felt as if it was against their rights. I had a staff member tell me it was against his religious

beliefs. I've had staff tell me that it's all political and (COVID-19 is) not real."

During the course of the case, the Oregon Department of Justice revealed that around one-third of the employees at the Two Rivers prison had received medical or religious exemptions from the vaccine mandate. Beckerman noted that employees who have vaccine exemptions must wear N95 masks at work, but the prison's COVID compliance officer admitted he doesn't know who those employees are, making it "impossible for him to monitor masking compliance in any meaningful way."

Beckerman denied Hanna's request to apply her order across all of Oregon's prisons.

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