

Umatilla plans new Umatilla River footbridge

Construction to start in the winter of 2022-23

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

Umatilla City Manager David Stockdale said hangups with the Federal Emergency Management Agency delayed a \$7.2 million project to replace the footbridge the city lost when the Umatilla River flooded in 2019 and 2020.

“They’ve been great to work with, but it’s been three steps forward and two steps back all along the way,” he said.

He said the agency has changed representatives frequently, leading to misunderstandings between it and the city. Stockdale said his office has had to submit and resubmit the same information, repeatedly. With the approval of FEMA, Stockdale said the city of Umatilla has a green light, and he announced a timeline.

Work on the bridge begins in July, with a demolition crew removing the demolished bridge from the



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald

Boaters on Thursday, April 14, 2022, float past the remains of a footbridge in Umatilla. The city starts work this summer on the \$7.2 million project to replace the bridge.

Umatilla River. Pieces, which now exist either in the river or along the bank, will be taken from the area.

“That might take a month in July and August,” he said.

Actual construction, he added, will start in the winter of 2022-23, and completion will be in early fall

the following year.

FEMA will provide \$4.7 million for the project, Stockdale said, the state of Oregon will chip in \$500,000 and the city will take out a \$1 million loan to help cover the remaining amount.

“We did get some insurance

proceeds, but they were very low, \$100,000,” Stockdale said.

Fixing a water main that was part of the bridge adds another \$1 million to the project, with \$750,000 coming from FEMA and \$250,000 from a state emergency grant

“The new bridge will be a significant improvement over the old one,” he said. It will be about 140 feet longer in length, as the abutments will be set back farther on the shoreline than the ones on the old bridge. The new bridge also will be higher than the old one by 8 feet and have a “slow and steady arch,” he said.

“If the old bridge was at this elevation, it would not have been damaged by flood,” Stockdale said.

A steel-frame bridge, it will not require a mid-river pier support. This will remove a hazard from the river, which troubled recreationalists and created a damming effect during floods.

“We’re really excited about the enhancements,” he said, which also include a boat house, benches and information boards.

Stockdale said the old bridge

was important to the community. A hundred students a day crossed the bridge to get to school. Other people crossed, too, as they walked downtown.

More improvements ahead

Stockdale said more is planned for both sides of the bridge.

The city obtained a recreational trails program grant from Oregon last year and plans to construct a new trail that will go from Powerline Road and loop down and connect to the new bridge.

“That will go in at the same time we are building the bridge,” he said.

Also in the works, thanks to a grant from the land and water conservation fund, is a playground, pavilion and sidewalks at Nugent Park. The trail and playground will meet federal standards for accessibility.

As the city recently installed a new restroom at the park and has made improvements to the nearby Little League field, Stockdale boasted the area is on its way to being something special.

Hermiston looks to take over roads bordering EOTEC site

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

Two Umatilla County roads running alongside the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston soon will belong to the city of Hermiston.

The Hermiston City Council at its meeting Monday, April 25, plans to approve transferring East Airport and South Ott roads to the city. County and city officials said the transfer is part of Hermiston’s growth and the fulfillment of an agreement.

“When EOTEC was first developed, it was developed as a partnership between the city of Hermiston and Umatilla County,” Umatilla County Commissioner Dan Dorran said. “When the county transferred the ownership of EOTEC to the city, the road was part of the process. The county was liable for paving the road.”

He said East Airport Road has been paved and the bike path is in. All this work was completed in the past month.

“The county has done its side, and now the city needs to take action,” Hermiston City Manager Byron Smith said.

The city’s part of the deal will be claiming the roads in the upcoming city council meeting.

He said this development will not change services for anyone who lives on the roads. Some of the



By Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald

A stop sign stands at the intersection of East Airport and South Ott roads, Hermiston. Umatilla County owns the roads, which run along the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, but the Hermiston City Council at its meeting Monday, April 25, 2022, looks to transfer the roads to the city.

homes on the road are county, others are city, and none of this will change.

“Nobody’s getting annexed or anything like that,” he said.

The transfer is related to the agreement between Hermiston and Umatilla County to develop the event center, Smith said, but this also “is kind of a separate issue.”

The county and the city have discussions often about county roads, he explained. As the city expands, it needs to turn county roads into city streets. He said this is regular business for a growing city.

The county transferred EOTEC to the city in 2008, Smith said, and he thinks things are going

“pretty well” with it. The next council meeting also will include an update on EOTEC.

“Right now, what we’re seeing is things are getting better after COVID. People are starting to book events, and it’s looking good,” he said.

Mark Morgan, assistant city manager, said for most people this sort of transfer seems insignificant, but it does make a difference.

“Whoever is legally responsible for that road, that’s where the ultimate long-term maintenance is assigned,” he said.

When the streets need work, the city will have to pay for it from money it receives from state gas tax revenue, he said.

Hermiston sewer upgrades close North First Place

Hermiston Herald

The first of three major capital improvement projects in Hermiston to upgrade underground utilities, road surface and overall access on North First Place began the week of Monday, April 18.

Mark Morgan, Hermiston assistant city manager, in a press release reported the road would be closed near the intersection of North First Place and Ridgeway Avenue beginning this week as utility crews bore under the street and nearby railroad line to tie a gravity sewer line into the existing main. The work and road closure is expected to continue as late as May 31.

The city’s Capital Improvement Plan initially called for replacement of the 41-year-old mechanical pump at lift station

No. 3 but after further study, the city opted to replace it with a gravity sewer main.

“After looking at the costs and benefits of a new pump versus a gravity main, we found that it not only saves upfront costs but will also require less in ongoing maintenance to install the main,” Morgan said in the press release. “We had initially expected to spend about \$900,000 to replace the pump and motor system, but by tying into the existing lines we’ll get the same benefits for an estimated \$561,924.”

The city reported it slated two other projects to break ground in the next year on North First Place that will improve the infrastructure and significantly impact traffic in the area until late 2023.

The first is a water line

replacement to completely overhaul the 100-year-old water main running the length of North First Place from Hermiston Avenue to Elm Avenue. The city expects the work to begin in the summer and continue into late fall, requiring significant closures throughout.

The next is a \$4.5 million road reconstruction project funded by state transportation dollars approved in 2017. This project will rebuild the existing road and install curbs, gutters and pedestrian access to make the road a better north/south artery west of the railroad tracks. The city expects that work to begin in early 2023 and conclude in the fall.

Hermiston’s Capital Improvement Plan projects, timelines, cost estimates, and updates is online at www.hermistonprojects.com.

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