

3 LOCAL NEWS

Umatilla County board approves new position, equipment requests

BY JOHN TILLMAN
Hermiston Herald

Umatilla County is getting a new service coordinator position for the county's developmental disabilities program.

The county board of commissioner at its meeting Aug. 17 approved the new position, which is to create consistency with monitoring requirements of foster and residential homes and employment sites. The county estimated the annual costs of the position is about \$110,000, and carryover dollars from the 2021-22 developmental disabilities budget will cover that.

The expenditure was one of several the county board approved at the meeting.

The board gave the OK for a new concrete vault toilet for Harris Park. The cost of delivering the unit in 2023 to Harris Park comes to \$30,355.20.

Commissioner John Shaffer serves on the Wildhorse Foundation board. A grant from the foundation is to pay \$14,000 of the cost, leaving a remainder of \$16,355.20. The county applied for an Oregon Parks and Recreation Department grant to cover some or all of that amount. If that grant were to fail, the county's public works department still has money in the budget to cover the tab.

The board also authorized public works to buy a new power broom from Papé Machinery, Pasco, for \$62,397.

This 2021 broom is to replace an older model in the fleet, which the department planned on selling at auction later this year.

The board gave the sheriff's office the go-ahead to buy new restraint systems by Safe Restraints Inc. for patrol vehicles. The cost of four WRAP systems and 20 associated ankle straps is \$7,602.37. Federal program funds will cover the expense.

County commissioners also approved the reclassification of a medical assistant to an office assistant II position to work almost full time in Pendleton's school-based health centers.

Umatilla County Health sponsors and staffs the centers. Alisha Lundgren, the health department's deputy director, in a memo to the board explained the county for more than a year has tried to fill a vacant medical assistant position while the nurse practitioner and two counselors in the centers need office assistant support rather than medical assistant support.

In other business, the county board presented the first reading to update the county department organization ordinance and organizational chart and set a second reading for its next meeting. And the board approved contracting with Michael Bergstrom of AgriNorthwest, Kennewick, as a consultant on the central pipeline project.

uting and possession of psilocybin and psilocin, psychedelic chemicals found in some mushrooms. State law provides that a city council may adopt an ordinance to give local voters the say in prohibiting the establishment of any of those registered or licensed activities.

Approval of this referendum would prohibit the establishment of psilocybin product manufacturers and psilocybin service center operators within Lexington.

—Hermiston Herald

Housing developments booming in Umatilla

BY MARCO GRAMACHO
Hermiston Herald

The city of Umatilla continues to experience a boom of major housing developments.

Several large housing projects completed have added close to 200 homes off Powerline Road. Work recently started on a major project that will add 326 houses by the end of the year on an 81-acre site on Grant Avenue just west of the Latter-day Saints church.

Jacob Foutz, senior planner for Umatilla, credited the expansion to lower taxes for home builders compared to surrounding cities. The development of the city's infrastructure also is part of the reason for the construction boom.

"Most of the new development is going on Umatilla's south hill, which is zoned for residential use and still has plenty of room for growth," Foutz said. "As developers build out the area, they are required to pay for the needed improvements and extensions to roads and utilities, then hand those investments over to the city."

Steven Wilson, chief sales officer at MonteVista Homes, explained the new development in Umatilla has 20 acres dedicated



An 81-acre site for housing off Grant Avenue, Umatilla, remains under development Saturday, Aug. 20, 2022. Umatilla continues to experience a boom in housing developments.

Phil Wright/
Hermiston Herald

to the city for parks and future trail expansion.

"We are working on the creation of streets and will be able to invite home buyers by October," Wilson said.

Wilson explained that several families are moving to the region from the Tri-Cities area for work.

"They are looking for quality housing with affordable prices. We are also seeing a market for retirees who are looking for a place closer to nature. Or families buying a second home," he said.

The McClannahan Summit offers options of housing with three or four bedrooms, two or three baths in 1,470-2,500 square feet in single and two tiers.

"The houses can be customized in multiple tiers, which is also a way to attract buyers in the luxury market," he said.

The McClannahan Summit, he said, is tapping right into the growing need of houses in Northeastern Oregon from families moving to the region to work for companies such as Google and Walmart and for smaller businesses, as well as that segment of elders looking for single-level homes.

The view of the Columbia River also is attractive to home buyers, he said, as in close proximity to shopping, medical, schools and parks.

"We are also seeing families moving to the area to follow their kids going to college," Wilson said.

Umatilla has been developing its infrastructure, and the new home developments brings revenue through property taxes, enterprise zone agreements, system development charges and other sources to help the city provide for the needs new homes and businesses create.

The city continues to make improvements in the water and wastewater systems, as well as creating better parks with playground equipment, lighting and new restrooms.

"We are building up in momentum of this huge growth in South Hill, and there are even waiting lists to buy homes there," Foutz said. "We said yes to development and it is paying off in the last three years, and there is still great potential."

Neighbor saves two in recent Umatilla house fire

BY ANTONIO ARREDONDO
Hermiston Herald

Donna Nagely of Richland, Washington, said the reason



Journot

she and a friend escaped a recent house fire in Umatilla is because of a neighbor.

Nagely and friend Steve Townsend, were winding down for the night on July 31 at Townsend's Rio Senda Street house in Umatilla. Then a neighbor rushed in the door.

The grill in the yard had caught fire. The propane tank was shooting flames at the house.

Conner Journot, 18, had been outside cleaning his fishing line, Nagely said. When he saw a plume of smoke coming from his neighbor's house, he at first assumed they were having a barbecue. Once he looked over the fence, how-

ever, he understood the gravity of the situation.

Nagely said Journot rushed into the house to warn the occupants. Townsend was sound asleep at the time, and Nagely was reading. Alarmed, the two quickly got ready to leave. By the time they were exiting the house, flames were nipping at the walls.

"Steve was a firefighter," Nagely said, "and even he said

that fire moved fast."

As soon as it started, Nagely said the fire was over; the two walked over to Journot's house and saw the house go up in flames. It still stands two weeks later, a hollow shell of what it once was. In the whirlwind of flames, several pictures and memories were lost.

"You always think, 'if the house burns this is what I'm going to take,'" Nagely said.

"You just don't have that time."

Nagely and Townsend have relocated to Nagely's residence but neither of them will forget the hero that saved them. Just three days after the fire, Nagely wrote a letter detailing the events and showing her gratitude for Journot's heroism.

"Thank you for your valiant effort, Connor," she wrote. "We are alive because you cared."

NEWS BRIEFS

Lexington residents to vote in November on psilocybin businesses

Lexington voters join the leagues of local communities voting on whether to ban psilocybin-related businesses and manufacturing.

The town council on Friday, Aug. 19 adopted a resolution referring the ban to the ballot in the November general election, Town Recorder Veronica Hess reported.

Oregon voted in 2020 to allow manufacturing, distrib-

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