



Where Life is Sweet

Mayor and Members of the City Council
STAFF REPORT
For the Meeting of April 13, 2026

Title/Subject

E Airport Road renaming establishment of hearing date

Summary and Background

In 2017, the public members of the Airport Advisory Committee requested that the City Council re-name Airport Road; given the increased traffic resulting from the then-new Eastern Oregon Trade & Event Center, the associated confusion with Airport Way, as well as the fact that there is no access to the airport from Airport Road.

At the February 4, 2026 Airport Advisory Committee meeting, the council-appointed public members of the committee again requested that the City Council re-name Airport Road. In addition to the original concerns regarding confusion related to emergency response, committee members noted that Airport Way is home to nearly a dozen businesses, including a LifeFlight base, and since 2017 has added three new commercial addresses.

On February 23, 2026, the city council requested the city engineer to draft an opinion on potentially renaming E Airport Road. Under the provisions of ORS 227.120, when a city does not have a street naming commission, the city engineer shall review the area within six miles of the city and determine if a change in street name is in the best interest of the city. Attached to this memo is a report from Joshua Lott of Anderson Perry, the city's contract engineering firm. According to the report, there is a similarly named road (Airport Way) within 2,000 feet and the similarity of the names could cause confusion for emergency response, delivery services, and event attendees. Further since E Airport Road does not provide direct access to the Hermiston Municipal Airport, it will reduce potential confusion over airport access in the future.

Bolstering the city engineer's report, staff has discovered additional testimony to the city council from 2017 from Umatilla County Dispatch, To-wit:

"Asked the Council to consider changing the name of Airport Way. Mrs. Primmer stated there was an accident on Airport Way and people were calling in the accident stating the accident was on Airport Rd, which could have caused some confusion and delays for emergency responders.

The Council briefly spoke about changing the name of Airport Way as County Commissioners indefinitely tabled the discussion regarding renaming Airport Rd.”

Emergency dispatching is also affected by having the word “airport” in the name of two different roads.

Based upon the city engineer’s recommendation, staff recommends the city council establish a date for a public hearing on May 11, 2026. Staff is recommending that the city council consider changing the name from E Airport Road to *E Veterans Avenue* at the hearing. No similar names currently exist within the vicinity, and the name meets all other city street naming conventions.

Following the city council’s consideration of a potential name change in February, there has been considerable media and social media attention on the issue. Testimony has already been submitted to city staff in advance of a hearing on this matter. Testimony received to date is also included in this packet. This testimony will be included again along with additional testimony received in the hearing packet for May 11.

Staff has researched some of the issues surrounding the name change. County staff is unaware of when the Airport Road designation came into effect. The original platting of the road was as Moses Road. The name was changed on maps in the 1980s, but there is not a clear record if the Moses Road name was ever officially used or signed. Research with the staff at the Hermiston Post Office indicates that mail forwarding is most likely not necessary for customers on the road unless the address numbers are changed. The carrier will likely know the name of the road has changed and be able to adjust delivery without forwarding requirements.

The procedure for renaming of public streets is governed by ORS 227.120 and requires notice of public hearing be published in the local newspaper. The procedures are as follows:

227.120 Procedure and approval for renaming streets. Within six miles of the limits of any city, the commission, if there is one, or if no such commission legally exists, then the city engineer, shall recommend to the city council the renaming of any existing street, highway or road, other than a county road or state highway, if in the judgment of the commission, or if no such commission legally exists, then in the judgment of the city engineer, such renaming is in the best interest of the city and the six mile area. Upon receiving such recommendation the council shall afford persons particularly interested, and the general public, an opportunity to be heard, at a time and place to be specified in a notice of hearing published in a newspaper of general circulation within the municipality and the six mile area not less than once within the week prior to the week within which the hearing is to be held. After such opportunity for hearing has been afforded, the city council by ordinance shall rename the street or highway in accordance with the recommendation or by resolution shall reject the recommendation. A certified copy of each such ordinance shall be filed for record with the county clerk or recorder, and a like copy shall be filed with the county assessor and county surveyor. The county surveyor shall enter the new names of such streets and roads in red ink on the county surveyor’s copy of any filed plat and tracing thereof which may be affected, together with appropriate notations concerning the same. The original plat may not be corrected or changed after it is recorded with the county clerk.

Tie-In to Council Goals

The establishment of a hearing date is a result of the council motion on February 23, 2026.

Fiscal Information

The city will incur minimal expenses in publishing notice of public hearing. As a courtesy, staff will also provide a notice of hearing by direct mail to all property owners abutting E Airport Road. As noted in the testimony, property owners will also incur financial expenses resulting from a name change.

Alternatives and Recommendation

Alternatives

The city council may choose to:

- Establish a hearing date of May 11, 2026 to consider changing E Airport Road to E Veterans Avenue.
- Decline to establish a hearing date of May 11, 2026 and table the question of renaming.

Recommended Action/Motion

Staff recommends that the city council establish a hearing date of May 11, 2026.

Submitted By:

Clinton Spencer, Planning Director