

EAST PORTAL: Parties are working toward financial agreement

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as the East Portal, is located across Highway 20 from the other properties, bounded by Highway 242, West Hood Avenue, and Highway 20. It is called the East Portal because it is the eastern end of scenic Highway 242 that crosses the Cascade Mountains, over the old McKenzie Pass (closed in the winter).

Although the Portal has belonged to the USFS for years, the Sisters Public Works Department has maintained the public restrooms for use by travelers during the summer. There is also an interpretive map at the Portal, as well as a walking labyrinth created by one of the Ford Family Foundation Leadership Cohorts.

The City of Sisters and Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) both have an interest in that triangle and have been in exploratory conversations for over a year regarding a possible partnership to acquire the land.

In February of this year, the Forest Service agreed to not market the land and keep it in public ownership. The City would like to retain the Open Space designation and have some of the property provide benefit to the transportation system.

“We are interested,” said ODOT Region 4 Chief Gary Farnsworth. “Have been for some time.”

ODOT would like to acquire the land, as a significant portion of the property already has existing highway facilities at the junction of State Highways 20 and 242. ODOT would agree to maintain the City’s multi-use trail on the west side of Highway 20. The multi-modal hub could provide more off-street parking and be an essential link in localized and regional transportation. The Forest Service would like to get the highest price possible to help fund their new ranger station.

According to City Manager Cory Misley, “The City has a strategic interest in shaping the future development of the remaining parcel to meet community needs... The parcel serves as a gateway to Sisters and Central Oregon. At the same time, it is underutilized, and ways to expand and enhance its uses in line with its current composition should be explored.”

City staff and ODOT have also been talking with Cascades East Transit, the public transportation provider in Central Oregon, to explore the possibility of siting a “mobility hub” on the property to serve Sisters, west Deschutes County, travel between regions, and the state highway system.

Misley explained that the

mobility hub would act as a focal point in the transportation network serving Sisters, integrating different modes of transportation (auto, pedestrian, public transportation, bicycles) to maximize connectivity in the area.

“A multitude of amenities could be layered into the property... Ultimately, a partnership between the City and ODOT, working closely with CET, would undertake a master planning process to best prioritize and design the facilities. Undertaking a project like this will require many years of planning and project development, funding acquisition, and project construction,” Misley said.

Council directed Misley to proceed with refining the draft intergovernmental agreement (IGA) and co-lead partnership with ODOT to acquire the East Portal and to use a portion of the property for development of a multi-modal transportation mobility hub.

The USFS originally valued the triangle based on best and highest use (regardless of City zoning), which would be prime commercial zone. It is currently zoned Open Space. Any developer would have to pay top dollar and then incur considerable additional time and expense to get a zone change, which wouldn’t be guaranteed at time of purchase. Misley said the City plans don’t support changing the zoning to commercial. The property has been listed for a long time with no offers.

The City and ODOT had an independent property appraisal done using the OS zoning designation. The appraisal came in at \$7,500 per acre, lower than the Forest Service price. Now

the negotiating with the FS begins. Before that can happen, the City and ODOT have to reach agreement and sign an IGA for their partnership in the East Portal. Next, they have to make a formal initial offer for the property, before the Forest Service can begin negotiations. Although ODOT would only own about 5 percent of the property, they are willing to pay 50 percent of the eventual purchase price.

Dave Brown of ODOT thinks the Forest Service will have a good discussion once the offer is made by the ODOT/ City partnership. He is hopeful the Forest Service will recognize that both parties, being public entities, do not have unlimited funds.

Misley concluded, “Ultimately, there is an opportunity for a win/win/win for the City, ODOT, and the Forest Service to work towards a sale of the East Portal and development along the conceptual lines outlined. This is an opportunity for the City to initiate the final piece of working to facilitate the development of the FS property, while leveraging strategic partnerships and delivering critical amenities to Sisters Country.”

The IGA should be concluded and signed in the next two to four weeks, at which time an offer can be submitted to the Forest Service.

An ODOT representative said, “This is a great opportunity for everyone. It’s a super rare opportunity to purchase land directly from the Forest Service, which almost never makes direct land sales. This piece of land is one of only two properties nationally being offered for sale by them.”

JOHNSEN: Portlander is headed to Sisters for SFF concert

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her “American Idol” days. She taught through School of Rock and they gave her the chance to give voice lessons.

“Once you teach something, the better you get at it and that is what I was doing with teaching vocal lessons,” she said.

Johnsen works with people of all ages and abilities.

Johnsen recently came out with her most recent record — a live-recorded album from Studio 1 in Abbey Road Studios in London. The songwriter thought she would have a three-day UK vacation, but her manager, Warren Wyatt, had what she calls a “trick up his sleeve” — a serendipitous single evening recording session

“Once you teach something, the better you get at it and that is what I was doing with teaching vocal lessons.”
— Hayley Johnsen



PHOTO PROVIDED

Portland singer-songwriter Haley Johnsen will perform at the Close to Home event on August 1 at Sisters Art Works.

at the historic studio, which is now being released as Haley’s first guitar-and-vocal-only album *London Sessions*.

The lead single, “Feel the Water,” was released March 13.

Haley Johnsen will be performing a set of her original music at the Close to Home event on August 1. Other artists include, David Jacobs-Strain, Beth Wood, Ron Artis II and the Truth, and Jeffery Martin. The event is sold out, but there is a waitlist. More information can be found at www.sistersfolkfestival.org.

More information on Haley Johnsen’s music can be found at www.haleyjohnsenmusic.com/music-1.

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