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Good day to our valued subscriber Einar Fugelseth of Elgin

Strong sentiments expressed at Greenway hearing

By Dick Mason The Observer

Union County residents expressed strong support for and opposition to the Grande Ronde River Greenway Project at a hearing before Island City's city council Tuesday.

The hearing was conducted by the council to take input on how it should use a \$1.1 million grant from the state for Phase II of the Grande Ronde Greenway Project. The grant, awarded in 2016, is for a trail that would run from an area east of Riverside Park to a pond in eastern Island City north of Highway 82.

People living near the area of the proposed route expressed fear that having a public path close to their homes will cause problems, but supporters say the Greenway would draw in visitors, boost the local economy, and improve the quality of life of residents.

Nellie Hibbert of Island City voiced opposition to the Greenway project, stating that it would cost her neighborhood its privacy.

"Would any of you want this in your backyard?" Hibbert asked.

Hibbert said she fears the Greenway would ultimately cost her neighborhood the rare qualities that make it special.

Roger Parish of La Grande also expressed concerns, stating the Greenway Project in general would make it easy for people using the path to look into the living rooms of nearby houses.

"This raises security concerns," Parish said.

He added he worries the Greenway would attract people using or selling illegal drugs.

Rebekah Livermore of La Grande spoke in support of the Greenway.

"I'm super excited about it," she said.

She said she often walks on the paved trail built in Phase I of the Greenway project, which runs east from Riverside Park for a quarter mile.

"I wish that it kept going. I love the area," Livermore said.

She said she has not seen people on the

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STRAIGHTENING THE MINAM CURVE

\$6.7 MILLION HIGHWAY 82 PROJECT WILL BOOST SAFETY

By Dick Mason The Observer

Work on making a deadly stretch of Highway 82 in northeast Union County safer is set to begin soon.

A road project to straighten a hairpin curve about two miles west of Minam will begin in a few weeks, according to Oregon Department of Transportation spokesman Tom Strandberg. Work on the curve will be done as part of ODOT's two-year \$6.7 million Minam Curve and Bank Stabilization Project.

"The curve has been a historical accident location," Strandberg told The Observer.

The project will straighten the curve, which currently has a speed limit of 25 miles per hour, and move the highway as much as 275 feet into the hillside. The new roadway is expected to have a posted speed limit of 50 miles per hour because the sharpness of its curve will be reduced, Strandberg said.

Oregon State Police Trooper Robbie Routt is among those who strongly support the project. Routt said the site has been the location of a number of serious accidents and fatal

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Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

The Minam curve has historically been the site of many car accidents due to its unexpectedly sharp corner. The Oregon Department of Transportation will begin construction soon to alleviate the hairpin curve.



Courtesy photo

The Liberty Theatre Foundation reported great strides have been made with funding recently. The photo shows the most recent work done on the theater — going to its original floors.

Liberty Theatre loan may be turned into grant

By Cherise Kaechele The Observer

The Urban Renewal Agency is considering turning the Liberty Theatre project's \$150,000 loan into a grant.

A work session was held Monday night to discuss the Liberty Theatre's updates and the project's financial standing.

"We're at a stage where all kinds of things are happening (with the Theatre)," said Michael Jaeger of

the Liberty Theatre Foundation. "In the last eight months, we've made incredible strides in terms of funding."

According to an update from the Liberty Theatre Foundation, the project has received or been awarded \$875,076 — \$166,618 of that money has come from the City of La Grande.

The Foundation was also awarded two facade grants from the agency totaling \$9,793, and the

URA gave the Foundation a total of \$150,000 in loans that could be turned into a grant if certain conditions were met. By Aug. 20, 2018, the Foundation was supposed to have raised \$1.5 million in grants and private funding toward renovations and have completed the improvements. The meeting, which took place on Aug. 20, marked the target date for the conditions to be met.

They weren't met, but that was

part of the reason for the Foundation and the URA to get together.

According to the URA agreement with the Foundation, "If the \$1.5 million in funds are raised and improvements substantially completed on or before this date; or if the renovation is completed for an amount under \$1.5 million but over \$1 million, and once the theatre is operational and open, all loan principal and accrued interest

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Wallowa County business owner petitions to change transient tax

Hotel owner claims proposed use of funds coming from potential tax increase is illegal

By Max Denning The Observer

Wallowa County hotel owner filed a petition in circuit court to review the title of a ballot measure proposed by the county commission that asks voters to raise the transient room tax by 3 percent in unincorporated areas of the county.

David Hurley, owner and operator of Eagle's View Inn and Suites in Enterprise and Eagle Cap Chalets in an unincorporated area of Wallowa Lake, has retained legal counsel to file a petition to challenge the transient tax ballot title. The plan is for the proceeds of the tax to go toward two areas: 70 percent to the county fairgrounds and 30 percent to the county sheriff's department.

Hurley thinks 70 percent going toward the fairgrounds might be

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section. Tonight 52 Low Mainly clear. Thursday 87/52 Mostly sunny.

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