



# JUNE

## LGCC rejects pot measure



Submitted photo

Four buildings were completely engulfed in flames in July 2017. Fire departments from across the county responded to the scene and were able to get the fire under control before it spread to nearby buildings. Over the last year, organizers and volunteers had worked to get grounds ready in time for the EOLS events.

## EOLS grounds ready

■ After a fire devastated portions of the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show grounds last year, the popular rodeo site made its return

By Dick Mason  
The Observer, June 4

People visiting the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show, which opened June 4 for its 111th year, may be inspired to reflect on the phoenix of Greek mythology, which against all odds rose from the ashes.

Despite the fire that destroyed a major portion of its structures nearly a year ago, the EOLS grounds look sharper than ever.

"I'm excited, stunned and awed," said Amy Largent, an Elgin 4-H adult leader, after observing how much work volunteers had done to restore the EOLS grounds June 2 during a cleanup day by 4-H and FFA youths.

The story of the phoenix tells of a bird that was destroyed by fire but rose from its ashes to live another life cycle.

Portions of the EOLS grounds, some built at least five decades ago, are back to begin another life cycle thanks to community members who were generous with donations of time, skills, equipment and materials.

"It was an incredible team effort," said Cassie Miller, a member of the EOLS Board of Directors.

Darren Hansen, president of the EOLS Board, said there was never any doubt the grounds would be restored in time for this year's show. He was confident people would step forward to help.

"I knew that we were going to make it no matter what," he said.

Hansen said beginning in March, volunteers met each Saturday and Sunday for work parties.

Of the approximately \$700,000 worth of work that has been done at the EOLS grounds since the fire, Hansen said, \$330,000 came from insurance, grants and donations. The remaining \$370,000 is how much Hansen estimates the materials donated and the volunteer labor received was worth. He said he cannot express how much he appreciates the community's help.

The EOLS blaze, which broke out at about 5 p.m. July 24, 2017, did not kill or injure any people or animals, but three race horse barns and a goat barn were destroyed. The race horse barns have been replaced with new metal ones, which have stalls for a total of 78 horses and are designed to provide greater comfort.

"They have better ventilation," Miller noted.

Rather than replacing the goat barn, the goats have been moved to the central part of the livestock show grounds where the animals have new pens. Their panels are about a foot higher than the ones they previously had. Kim Hudson, a superintendent for the 4-H goat show at the EOLS, said the taller panels mean entrants will no longer have to chase goats that have jumped out of their pens or retrieve them from other pens they have hopped into.

EOLS visitors and participants are also taking note of the new 8,000-square-foot show and sale barn, which is about twice as large as the old sale barn and has restrooms, a concession stand and an office. The old sale barn is now being used for beef show events.

Melinda Becker-Bisenius, a La Grande 4-H parent, said the larger sale barn is a big plus.

"It is special and much nicer," she said. "We needed a new sale barn."

One of the features she likes is the natural light provided by windows in the upper part of the building.

The added space makes it easier for livestock owners to get their animals in and out quickly during the annual EOLS 4-H and FFA Auction.

Honour Bowen, a Union County 4-H program assistant, also is a big fan of the larger sale barn.

"There will be room for more buyers," she said.

Bowen said the added space may mean some people who just want to get a look at the auction may stay and buy something. Now, the people watching will be able to sit in bleachers and there will be tables for those buying to sit at. Previously almost everyone at the auction had to stand.

Bowen said she had been worried about the EOLS's future after the fire but was heartened by how people rallied to come to its aid. "It was a great outpouring," she said. "Everybody was so determined."

Mike Becker, owner of the construction firm Mike Becker General Contractor, is among those who donated a significant amount of time and materials for the restoration work and construction of the new sales barn. "He was a driving force behind the project," Miller said.

Becker's company was recognized along with about 20 other businesses and individuals for their help in restoring the EOLS grounds at a ribbon cutting ceremony.

"What (the volunteers) did was huge," Miller said. "Without all of their work, it would not have turned out as well as it did."

By Cherise Kaechele  
The Observer, June 8

The La Grande City Council took a very different approach to the recreational marijuana measure on June 6. In April, the council voted 5-2 to support putting the measure on the ballot. This time, the council voted 6-1 against it.

The measure was going to give the City of La Grande voters a chance to decide on whether they wanted to repeal the ban on recreational marijuana and allow dispensaries within city limits.

The supporters of the measure all asked the councilors to allow the voters to decide.

Those against the measure who were in attendance said allowing recreational marijuana dispensaries within the city limits is dangerous.

Art Rhodes asked how many times will the council push to legalize recreational marijuana. He said this falls on the heads of the children. If the decision to pass this measure is because of

the tax money the city would receive, then it is not worth endangering children.

La Grande Police Chief Brian Harvey was asked to speak about the impacts he's seen after the legalization.

Harvey said mental health cases have increased "exponentially" since it has been legalized. He said he's also seen a rise in child neglect cases.

"You're normalizing it more," Harvey said if recreational marijuana were to pass. "We are doing this at the expense of our youth. That's a heavy price to pay."

Councilor Mary Ann Miesner said she has not had anyone personally ask her to put the measure on the ballot.

"I've heard people opposed to it," she said. "I think it's not the right time."

The testimony given at the meeting was entirely against putting the measure on the ballot. Most, but not all, of the testimony that has been given

in the public hearings have been against the measure. However, the councilors did not acknowledge that those who have supported putting the measure on the ballot did so by arguing to let the people vote.

In the April vote, the councilors used that argument when they voted the measure to its second reading — let democracy do what it is designed to do.

This may not be the end for legalizing a recreational marijuana dispensary, though. The council argued in past meetings if a person were to bring a petition around to place a measure on the ballot, then the private citizens responsible for the measure would be able to control the regulations. So far, no such petition has officially been mentioned.

After the council meeting, the Urban Renewal Agency convened and asked Market Place owner Al Adelsberger to give the URA an update about what's happening with the grocery store

since it closed in early February.

Adelsberger had requested an amendment to the Market Place contract with the city, dropping Troy Berglund, who was the owner of the Market Place stores in La Grande and Joseph, but filed for bankruptcy.

Adelsberger said there are three new partners to the new store, which will be called Market Place Family Fresh, but there was still no timeline for when it will be open.

Councilor Corrine Dutto told Adelsberger that he has \$500,000 of the city's money and the council would like to know when the market will open.

"I have \$2.8 million invested in the store. I'd like to see it as quick as possible," he said.

Dutto pushed him to be more specific with the timeline — whether it'll be open this year, next year or longer.

Adelsberger said the store will be open later in 2018.

## County Commissioners discuss gun measure

■ Measures 43 and 44, which would restrict firearms debated at June 13 work session

By Cherise Kaechele  
The Observer, June 15

The Union County Commissioners held a work session June 13 to talk about two Oregon gun measures.

Oregon Initiative Measure 43, which aims to ban the possession of assault weapons capable of holding more than 10 rounds, and Measure 44, which aims to put regulations on firearms, have been circulating through the state as petitions are gathered.

On June 8, the Oregon Supreme Court stalled Measure 43.

Opponents have argued the ballot language "uses the politically charged and emotionally laden words, 'assault weapons,' and 'large capacity magazines.' The description is also misleading, argumentative, and deceptive because it implies the measure applies only to a limited and belligerent group of 'assault weapons' gun owners," according to an Associated Press article.

A number of counties in the eastern part of the state, including Wallowa County, have passed resolutions opposing the measures. The counties have stated they support the Second Amendment and would not abide by the measures if they passed in November.

In months prior, Union County residents have proposed the same resolution, requesting the

commissioners put an ordinance on the November ballot that, if passed, would preserve the Second Amendment in the county.

In April, a group of opponents of the measure told the commissioners they want the ordinance to state that Union County will preserve the right to "keep and bear arms (as) originally understood; in self-defense and preservation, and in defense of one's community and country" and to stipulate that any regulation violating the Second Amendment shall be deemed unconstitutional in Union County.

Commissioner Donna Beverage brought the resolution in front of the board for consideration prior to the June meeting. Commissioner Jack Howard requested the board talk about the resolution at a work session when she proposed the resolution.

Both of the measures were discussed at the work session, but the main measure discussed was Measure 43.

Commissioner Steve McClure opened up the discussion by asking whether the commissioners should take a stance on the resolution — citing the board does not usually endorse candidates.

"I don't think it's appropriate," McClure said.

The commissioner was speaking about an unofficial rule the board has previously followed that condones endorsing political candidates running for office.

He said he has his own opinion on the measures, but he didn't know whether taking an official stance as a commis-

sioner was a good idea.

"I don't think it's the same thing," Beverage replied. "We're not endorsing an individual but an issue."

McClure countered that the board did have to take an official position on the marijuana issue. However, he did not seem to stray on the fact that passing a resolution to oppose a measure going on a ballot would be similar to endorsing a candidate.

Howard said he understood the reason why the commissioners were being asked to take a stand on the issue, but he felt that the voters needed to decide.

Beverage said she believes it is an important topic to the voters in Union County. She thinks taking a stance on it now before the measure "goes too far" was a smart move on the board's part.

"We need to think ahead," she said.

Howard noted that gun violence is a big problem and people are hurting other people.

Beverage asked Howard whether he felt the measure went against the Constitution.

Howard would not give a definitive yes or no, but instead said the work session was not "for that."

He said he defends the Constitution and he also trusts the democratic process.

"I'm a conservative in some things and a liberal in some things," said Howard in reply to Beverage's question.

He said the county's vote is not going to change for this measure whether the commissioners pass the resolution or not.

**FIND TIRES FOR WINTER**

**COMMERCIAL TIRE**

**AT COMMERCIALTIRE.COM**