



Art by Amanda Weisbrod/The Observer

■ After nine years of hosting EOFF films, the Granada abruptly ended the relationship this year

By Max Denning
The Observer

This year will mark the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Oregon Film Festival, which has grown into

a regional event attracting filmmakers also featured at the country’s most well-known film fests like Sundance and SXSW. For its 10th year, the festival’s orga-

nizers had hoped for it to be an even bigger affair — but the owners of the Granada Theatre have other ideas.

After nine years of hosting EOFF feature-length films, the Granada Theatre has severed its ties with the film festival. In an email exclusively obtained by The Observer from EOFF Director

Christopher Jennings, Mark Greulich, one of the owners of the Granada, wrote to Patty Johnson, manager of the movie house, giving the last word on the film festival on Jan. 14. “As we discussed this morning, please inform Alan Arnson the La Grande Theatre will not be participating in the Eastern Oregon

Film Festival. We appreciate Alan’s enthusiasm, his military service and his deep commitment to the film festival, and we wish everyone the very best for the future,” Greulich wrote.

The other co-owners of the theater, Charles Greulich and John Greulich, were cc’d on the email.

The Observer made multiple requests for comment via email, and called John’s home number in Carlsbad, California. None of the Greulichs responded to the requests.

Alan Arnson is a Granada employee who worked as the venue manager for the

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Life in the fast lane

■ Work begins on \$30 million Ladd Canyon project

By Dick Mason
The Observer

The western end of Ladd Canyon is set to lose a bridge and gain two major safety features.

The Oregon Department of Transportation is launching its \$30 million Ladd Canyon Freight Improvement Project. Its centerpiece will be the addition of a 2.5-mile eastbound Interstate 84 lane. A second major component will be the replacement of a bridge with a culvert, said ODOT spokesman Tom Strandberg.

The new lane, to be added on the

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Observer file photo

A new 2.5 mile eastbound Interstate 84 lane will be added to the west entrance into Ladd Canyon over the next two years.

CHD launches telebehavioral health program

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

Take a moment and think — really think — about how many hours a day you spend on your smartphone. Now, ask yourself how you feel when your latest social media post gets several “likes” in a row, or when a friend texts you out of the blue. What about the feeling you get from idly scrolling through your social media feeds, looking into other people’s lives and silently comparing yours to theirs?

Studies show while the highs of smartphone usage can lead to addiction, the lows could trigger behavioral health issues such as anxiety and depression.

Daisy Giddings, lead clinician at the Center for Human Development in La Grande, said she has witnessed evidence of these lows.

“I have seen cellphones, Facebook and Instagram contribute to challenges with self-esteem and identity in some of my clients,” she said. “Some of the things I plan with clients is taking those apps off of their phones to remove access as much as they can.”

As for the highs, Aaron Grigg, CHD’s mental health director, said because social media usage triggers the rush of dopamine, a neurotransmitter responsible for pleasure and satisfaction

as part of the brain’s reward system, people are likely to become dependent on their smartphones for happiness.

“There is an addictive nature to smartphones, especially around social media, gaming and even texting just because of the instant gratification,” he said. “Your life gets enveloped by the need to get liked online. It becomes a bit of an addiction.”

A recent study published to BMC Psychiatry, an online journal focusing on the

“Your life gets enveloped by the need to get liked online. It becomes a bit of an addiction.”

— Aaron Grigg, mental health director of the Center for Human Development

prevention, diagnosis and management of psychiatric disorders, analyzes the link between smartphone usage and behavioral health, claiming people with an addiction to their smartphones are more likely to have behavioral health issues, and vice versa.

“It is speculated that not only addiction to smartphone usage can affect one’s mental and behavioral status, but also that those with mood disorders are more likely to become addicted to using their smartphones,” the study states.

The study recommends depression-vulnerable

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Calls for projects focus of meeting

■ URA discusses process, transparency

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

The La Grande City Council, meeting as the Urban Renewal Agency, continued discussions of its 2019 goals at Wednesday night’s meeting.

Though the agency had four pages of priorities to discuss, the main underlying issue was looking at the annual Call for Projects and seeing if there is a better way to generate economic development in the Urban Renewal District. The Call for

Projects is a URA program in which business owners apply for grants and the URA decides what’s worth investing in. The frustration, according to URA member Nicole Howard, who has been vocal about the program’s shortcomings previously, is the URA is not equipped to adequately evaluate the potential success of the proposed projects.

“I am deeply uncomfortable with the Call for Projects, because we’re just guessing,” Howard said to the agency on Wednesday. “We’re not business majors.”

Each year, the agency has approximately \$200,000 to invest in the applicants’ businesses. Projects like the Landing Hotel, Hines Meat Com-

pany and the renovation of the Imperial/IOOF building have received funds in the past. However, nearly every year, there are projects that receive funding but do not follow through with their project. In that case, the funding goes back into the URA pot.

Generally, the maximum amount of money a project can receive is \$75,000 and the minimum grant is \$5,000.

Since the Calls for Projects program began in 2010, aspects of the process have been scrutinized nearly every year, including its rating system and the uncertainty of whether to give all the applicants a little bit of money or only the few most promising businesses more funds. The program has been refined throughout the years, but on Wednesday the agency

members — who inherited the positions when they joined the city council — said the URA needs to develop a better system.

One of the main concepts the agency worked on was creating categories for businesses to apply for that will focus on a specific area. For example, a set amount of funding would be put aside for manufacturing businesses that would move into the Business and Technology Park. Another category could be businesses that want to work on one of the blighted buildings in town.

Agency Manager Robert Strobe said there are not a lot of people interested in the business park. Though there is money for business owners to apply for, the requirements for being eligible for the funding are strict, and the

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Friday
27 LOW
Mainly clear



Saturday
49/33
Mostly cloudy



Sunday
52/26
Periods of sun

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Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
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