

# COVE

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 auto shop in previous years and didn't think it was fair to deny Craft and Mahlar the opportunity to use their newly purchased building to start their business.  
 "We want to see things grow here, I just don't see what we're benefitting from stopping somebody who spent a massive amount of money to purchase a property," he said.  
 Some citizens were concerned a coffee shop would cause unsavory smells in the area, or if the property was rezoned and Craft and Mahlar ended up selling, a more unfavorable business might take its place.  
 The rezoning issue was the first and only item to be discussed during the public forum, which started at 7:30 p.m., but the motion and subsequent vote to replace the lot did not take place until shortly after 9. Councilwoman Lana

Shira and Conrad both said they were in support of the zone change because the building was made for commercial use, so if the zone isn't changed, it will most likely stay vacant indefinitely.  
 The motion to change the zone to commercial passed unanimously with one recusal from Shawn Parker, who said he had personal ties to the applicant. When the motion passed, it was amid sighs, dramatic exits and cries of "finally" from the crowd of citizens.  
 The rest of the meeting went quickly, with all motions passing unanimously. When the public comment section opened, things heated up even more.  
 Two citizens were upset because of Mayor Del Little's proposed sidewalk ordinance, which passed its final editing during the meeting and will be submitted for a public hearing and voted on at the next

city council meeting.  
 Three other citizens were there to suggest a lower speed zone in a certain area of Cove, saying cars passed by at dangerous speeds. They were not happy with the established path to lowering the speed, which consists of requesting a speed study from the Oregon Department of Transportation as a first step.  
 The citizens argued they had gone through that process before, and the speed limit was never changed. They suggested simply putting up signs that declared a 25-mile speed limit, even if it couldn't actually be enforced.  
 Shira agreed to look into what options the council had in changing the speed zone and to report her findings during the next meeting. ■  
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Francisca Benitez/The Observer  
 Cove citizens pile into Cove City Hall for the monthly city council meeting Tuesday. In the back corner near the door stand Craig Mahlar and Shaina Craft, who filed for their building to be rezoned, which was a hot topic of debate.

# SYNERGY

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 said she wants people who view her art to see the truth.  
 "I wanted to put out things that nobody really talks about and include all the aspects of motherhood as opposed to only the happy moments," she said. "For some of the pieces I took portraits of marks of motherhood — stretch marks, C-section scars. I show the marks that are left behind that we tend to hide, but we should be more proud of those."  
 While Welch said she created these works of art to help gallery visitors learn or feel something new about the concept of motherhood, she also had an ulterior motive for choosing this theme.  
 "My main goal was to get a lot of the feelings and thoughts I've had in my head for a long time out — it's been therapeutic for me," she said. "I want people to gain a further understanding of motherhood that they wouldn't normally think about. I'm really hoping people will take time to dig more into the meaning behind my work rather than just glance at it."  
 This deeper intention behind her creations is something Welch said she had the chance to explore while studying at EOU, and is thankful she did.  
 "(The program) has re-

ally given me more insight into putting more meaning behind what I make instead of just making things to do it," said Welch, who also teaches classes at Art Center East in La Grande.  
 Edwards agreed that the program teaches students to find inspiration and intentionally place deeper, hidden meaning within their artwork.  
 "I didn't really know how to come up with concepts (before the capstone program). I could make anything, but coming up with an idea and theme and sticking with it, I had a hard time with," Edwards said. "My peers and teachers helped me mature in that part of my practice. I needed more of an idea on how to stick with something and hold on to it. It was something I had never done before, and it made me feel like I accomplished a lot."  
 Edwards, who is technically still a junior, was able to take the capstone class early on recommendation, even though she still has one more year to go before graduating from EOU. She said she chose the symbiotic nature between humanity and the natural world as her capstone concept because of her interest in psychedelia, biology and ecological relationships.  
 "I used to be all about myself, but when I started experimenting with psy-

chedelics, it gave me a different perspective of the world around me," she said. "Ultimately, my goal was to make people aware of the natural world. Maybe I'm trying to make it go to an environmental place too because we're living in a state where we're facing environmental problems and I think we don't appreciate living things as much as we should."  
 Edwards said she considers herself to be a 2-D media artist with painting as her primary focus. To her, EOU's capstone program offered the experience she needed to view herself as a professional artist.  
 "(The exhibit) is making my dream of my future as an artist a bit more real," she said. "Work wise, it was a lot, but that's what I loved about the program. It teaches you how to be a disciplined artist. You have to be in the studio 24/7 and don't stop."  
 Although she's not sure what comes next after she earns her bachelor's degree, Edwards said she sees herself teaching fine arts to others one day.  
 While Edwards and Welch both said they found their passion and talent for creating art early on in their childhoods — Welch with her drawing and sewing, and Edwards with her fascination of the animated TV series "Sailor Moon" — Tsiastos has a

different backstory.  
 Tsiastos said her aptitude for the arts began while she was at La Grande High School where she took a lot of painting and drawing classes. But once she moved to Ontario to attend Treasure Valley Community College, she took some time off from art as the college didn't offer many art classes. After she earned her associate's degree from Treasure Valley, Tsiastos stepped onto Eastern's campus as a psychology student, but quickly changed course.  
 "When I switched to art from psychology, I noticed it's a lot different because there are no right answers, there's no studying, there are no tests — that was a big change," she said. "Psychology wasn't clicking for me. I decided I loved art and the creative aspect of things, so I might as well go for it. I'm really glad I stuck it out and I made that decision."  
 In her "Synergy" pieces, Tsiastos explores the idea of social media consumption and humankind's fascination with technology through her newfound love of photography. She's a self-described "phone-junkie" and is the first to admit she is always on her phone, either perusing Instagram or chatting with friends and family members.  
 "I want people to understand my view of social media," she said. "I'm not

trying to say social media is bad. I just want them to have an understanding of where I'm coming from and the experience I've had with having a connection to a phone rather than a person I cherish a lot."  
 Tsiastos said her biggest takeaways from EOU's capstone program are a boost in confidence and a strengthened sense of self.  
 "The most valuable thing I've (learned) from being an art major is that you fail a lot and you're not going to please everybody, so you have to be happy with what you create," she said. "There are viewers and critics, but you're not striving to get the A+ or good grades — you're making art because it's what you want to do."  
 Cory Peeke, director of the Nightingale Gallery and leading professor for the senior capstone exhibition program, said the goal of the three-term course is to teach art students how to express themselves in an individualistic way.  
 "We're trying to get them to develop their own body of work and ideas

so they aren't like anyone else," he said. "Watching the students develop their unique voice and vision for their work is very compelling. All three artists (in this exhibit) have come a really long way visually and intellectually."  
 After "Synergy" comes to a close, the capstone program's second exhibition will open in the Nightingale Gallery, featuring work from the remaining four seniors in EOU's arts program.  
 "Synergy" opens on April 5 with a reception from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., and runs until April 19 in the Nightingale Gallery, located in Loso Hall on the Eastern Oregon University campus in La Grande. Regular gallery hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday. For more information, visit eou.edu/art/nightingale-gallery or follow the Nightingale Gallery on Facebook and Instagram. ■  
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# BOOKS

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 down when discussing their response.  
 "You don't want the other team to hear what you are talking about," Myer said. "You want to whisper."  
 The team's coaching staff, in addition to Null, also includes his wife, Heather, and Celine Vanderulgt, all of whom are LMS parents.  
 The three use a creative approach to prepare their team, such as variations of the TV game show "Jeopardy!" and the legendary board game Monopoly.  
 While playing Jeopardy! students are given an answer to a possible OBOB question and then must respond with the proper question just like real Jeopardy! contestants. Students, when

playing Monopoly, must answer an OBOB question when they land on a lot before they can purchase it, said Glenn Null. He credits his wife with developing the Jeopardy! version of OBOB and Vanderulgt with creating the Monopoly OBOB model.  
 The process of preparing to compete in Battle of the Books events can be stressful, but the team has an antidote for this — donuts. The students live by a slogan of "Be calm, eat a donut." This slogan is printed on the team's T-shirts and is reinforced by donut breaks between rounds at competitions and at practices, Myer said.  
 The 16 books on the 2018-19 Oregon Battle of the Books lists for the

grade 3-5, 6-8 and high school divisions came out about 11 months ago, and some LMS team members began reading them that day and have not stopped.  
 "I have read them over and over," Morton said.  
 Each team member has several specialty books from the OBOB list, which they have been asked to focus on. This week the team's members are skimming their specialty books as the state competition nears, Morton said.  
 Glenn Null said coaching the Battle of the Books team is a delight because of the enthusiasm of the students.  
 "These kids want to be here. They want to have fun (by participating)," he said.  
 Myer said a Battle of the Books participant must

enjoy reading, but that is not all.  
 "You must love to read and compete," Myer said. "Not everyone who loves to read likes to compete."  
 She also noted Battle of the Books is not for book lovers who want to read a wide variety of books over the course of a year. Myer explained some readers do not want the range of their leisure reading limited by the 16 books on their OBOB list.  
 Oregon Battle of the Books began more than a decade ago and is sponsored by the Oregon Association of School Libraries. OBOB, according to www.oregonbattleofthebooks.org, is run completely by volunteers through the Oregon Association of School Libraries. ■

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