

HOMES

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the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Tsiatsos has worked on several land development and housing projects in La Grande with FTK Holding Group LLC and independently through his company, GCT Land Management.

Tsiatsos said the idea for a veterans village came to him when he saw the site was for sale and it was unusually large for the area. He decided to buy the land to turn into a few residential properties. When the laws surrounding tiny homes were loosened in 2018, Tsiatsos began looking into the idea of creating a village of tiny homes.

He said he was inspired by similar villages elsewhere in Oregon, like one in Eugene that was created as an affordable option to house the homeless. The Register-Guard reported the village is located in the Whittacre district of Eugene and is called Emerald Village.

Upon further consideration, he chose to make the houses in La Grande specifically for veterans.

"I feel like they deserve help — a lot of people do —

but they are a population that has done a lot for the nation," he said.

Tsiatsos said he designed the tiny houses to feel as spacious as possible, and he hopes the village will be a community that veterans can comfortably call their own.

"Our goal is to make it a place that is sustainable for years. We're hoping it's not going to be a place where people come and go every year," he said. "I'm hoping (the houses will be) long-term homes."

Each tiny house will have a front and back porch, a fenced yard and parking. They will also be completely furnished with everything from a TV, a washer and dryer to towels and bedding. The plans even include fireplaces.

"We're hoping people can just walk in, turn the lights on and live," Tsiatsos said.

Two buildings that already exist on the property will not be demolished but turned into community facilities. The smaller one will be used for crafts and storage, according to Tsiatsos. The other will be a community building, complete with on-site counseling for veterans.

Tsiatsos said the vision

is to create a community of affordable housing tailor-made for veterans. He said Veterans Affairs informed him that most veterans in the area are in need of single occupant housing, which is why each tiny home will house only one person.

Although the project is focused on helping veterans, Tsiatsos said the project will help the rest of the community as well.

"I think there's an opportunity to help with the housing crisis La Grande has," he said, explaining that providing housing made specifically for veterans will free up housing options that might be more suitable for other community members.

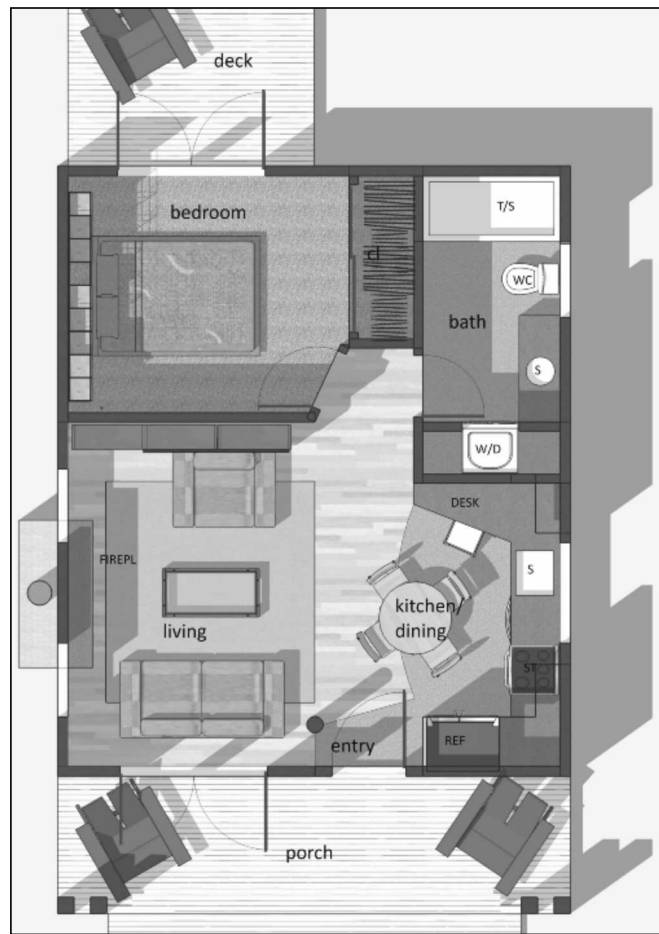
The selection of the veteran occupants will be handled through the VA, and Tsiatsos said a local property management company will manage the village. The project is seeking funding from private donors who can sponsor houses in the project.

As for the construction, Tsiatsos said he often makes an effort to employ people for his contracting business who struggle to find work for a variety of reasons, and he hopes he

can turn the construction process into an opportunity to employ veterans.

"Through my company, I like to extend help to people who need a second chance," he said. "We are extending that offer to the people who will be living there who might have skills or abilities that could help with the construction," he said.

Although a completion date has not yet been set, renderings and floor plans have been made and the project has been approved by the city of La Grande. Initial demolition and clearing of the site is already in progress. Tsiatsos estimates that the construction process will take about 18 months to complete and will likely start this summer. ■



Courtesy photo
Each tiny house will have the same layout as this floor plan created by Gust Tsiatsos, and will be fully furnished.

Contact Francisca Benitez at 541-963-3161 or email fbenitez@lagrandeobserver.com.

CHD

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five consecutive years.

Stanton created the hunt as part of her Capstone project for her degree at Eastern Oregon University, where she is majoring in communications and business administration. She said the idea of the hunt is to get people to engage with CHD, both online and in person.

"It gets people on our website, on our social media and in our doors," she said.

The public health team at CHD helped Stanton get the project rolling.

The hope is that people going to CHD's social media, website and office for the hunt might notice some services they can take advantage of, such as STD testing and prevention, birth control and free condoms.

Stanton said CHD has been reaching out to young people in the community in a variety of ways, but when young people seemed hesitant to come up to a physical booth at previous events, she realized that the best way to get the word out might be

through social media. That's how she came up with the idea for the Easter egg hunt.

"I was afraid that people weren't going to look for the eggs and what have you, but it's been a really great turn out," she said.

Stanton said all the eggs have been found extremely quickly.

"The first day we launched, it (the plastic egg) was found within an hour," she said.

Stanton, who has interned with CHD since January, said she has gotten a lot out of the experience, adding the best part is "being able to give back to a community that has given so much to me." Stanton is a La Grande native.

She said the event will culminate on Easter Sunday and hinted there will be more opportunities to win prizes on that day. She said the only way to win is to keep your eye on CHD's social media pages.

Twitter: @chdinc; Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/pg/Center-for-Human-Development-Inc-CHD-122728710568/about/?ref=page_internal ■

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COVE

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items will be steel for the roof and brick for the exterior, and the lower priced products will be a synthetic roofing material and veneer siding.

Pettit said the more expensive material will last longer.

"We want it to be durable and have longevity," the superintendent said.

The lower-cost items might be used, though, if bids for construction of a building with a steel roof and brick siding come in too high, Pettit said.

Board member Jamie Dickenson said she would be leery of using lower-quality materials to construct the building.

"I don't want to be in a position in which we will have more costs in a few years (if lower grade materials break down)," Dickenson said.

The construction of the building will be paid for

with money the school district has been setting aside for capital projects for a number of years. Pettit told The Observer earlier this year that the school district has been able to build up the funding needed for this construction work by operating efficiently.

Pettit said on Tuesday the school district will not take on any debt to during construction.

"We have no debt and we have no plans to take on any debt," Pettit said.

The food service building will replace the school district's present cafeteria and kitchen at Cove Elementary School. Pettit said the present cafeteria is not big enough for a school district like Cove, which has about 300 students. The cafeteria has capacity of just 40 students, which means that students from multiple grades are not able to eat in the cafeteria at once.

This would represent

the Cove School District's third construction project in the past 25 years. Two additional high school classrooms were built in about 10 years ago and a music room was constructed in the early 1990s.

In another action item the school board voted to provide \$3,000 to Cove High School's first-year Future Business Leaders of America chapter to pay for a trip to the organization's national leadership conference this summer in San Antonio, Texas. The funds will help two students who qualified for nationals earlier this month and the CHS FBLA chapter advisor to make the trip, which will cost a total of \$3,700.

Pettit said it is not normal for a school district to provide financial support to a program such as FBLA, but said it is important to early in its history.

"For a program to get off the ground it needs district support," Pettit said. ■

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Each tiny house will have the same layout as this floor plan created by Gust Tsiatsos, and will be fully furnished.

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