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THE OBSERVER

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Good day to our valued subscriber Diane Higley of La Grande

LGCC approves parks fees and LID report

■ URA moves to extend Liberty Theatre deadline with caveats

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

At its regular meeting Wednesday night, the La Grande City Council amended an outdated park facilities fees policy, accepted the final 2018 study and report for the sidewalk local improvement district, and proclaimed May 2019 as Older Americans Month.

Stu Spence, La Grande Parks & Recreation director, argued the city's park pavilion rental fees and reservation methods must be revised, as they haven't been touched since 2009.

"It's out of date. It doesn't work for our systems anymore. It's really tough on staff, and we've realized the customer experience is affected as well," he said at the meeting. "Essentially, we're simplifying the process for the customer and for the staff, and in turn creating an easier process, more revenue and less cost."

The amendment will address several fee and scheduling concerns for Riverside Park Pavilion and its kitchen, Pioneer Park Rotary Pavilion, Birnie Park Pavilion and Max Square.

According to a packet provided by the city, key changes include: "dropping the non-resident fees to standardize rentals, adding Birnie Park Pavilion as a rental space, eliminating the cleaning fee, and clearly defining pavilion and kitchen rental fees."

Spence said these revisions will not take place until Nov. 1 as to honor the price points for those who

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Amanda Weisbrod/The Observer

Liberty Theatre gets a boost

■ Oregon Main Street awards two grants to downtown La Grande, others in Baker, Umatilla, and Wallowa counties

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

Northeast Oregon just received a big boost in funding for projects that have been long underway in Baker, Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties.

In La Grande, the Oregon Main Street Revitalization grant program awarded \$100,000 to both the Liberty Theatre and Putnam Build-

ing projects, totaling \$200,000 for the city's downtown area.

Thursday evening, members of the La Grande City Council, La Grande Main Street Downtown Board and Liberty Theater Foundation gathered at the La Grande Main Street Downtown office to celebrate.

"It is a wonderful pro-



Observer file photo

LEFT: Community members meet downtown to celebrate the Liberty Theatre's latest grant money success.

gram where Oregon Main Street lets every local Main Street select a project in town that we decide is a great project for the community," said Shawn Risteen, La Grande Main Street Downtown Board president. "This year, we have selected the Liberty Theatre and Putnam Building combined.... I think this will be a huge help

for getting the process going to where we can get that project opened up a lot quicker."

Risteen explained while the grant is split in two, the application process was a "joint venture" between the Putnam and the Liberty because the adjacent buildings share sewer and water lines. The total \$200,000 will

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Fireworks fundraising propelled by UC Commissioners

By Dick Mason
The Observer

The annual Union County fireworks show, set to make an encore in Union two months from now, was further propelled toward its fundraising goal Wednesday.

The Union County Board of Commissioners voted to provide \$3,500 to the fireworks show. The donation was made at the request of Doug Wiggins, Union's city administrator.

The fireworks show now has between \$19,000 and \$20,000 in contributions, according to Wiggins, a member of the Union County Fireworks Action Committee.

"Our goal is to raise \$22,000," Wiggins said.

The Fourth of July fireworks show was conducted in La Grande on the campus of Eastern Oregon University for at least three decades before it was moved

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A walk for Gideon Gabriel

■ Sunday cystic fibrosis walk to benefit local 18-month-old

By Francisca Benitez
The Observer

The parents of an 18-month-old La Grande child are hoping a fundraising walk will make a difference for their son and 30,000 other Americans with cystic fibrosis.

Candace Salim, mother of Gideon Salim, organized the May 5 fundraiser with the hope it will become an annual event. All funds raised during the walk will be split 50/50 between Gideon and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

According to the Mayo Clinic, CF is an inherited disorder that causes severe damage to the lungs, digestive system and other organs in the body. There is no cure for CF.

Last year, The Observer told the story of Gideon and his family, how they received the first word that Gideon might have CF two weeks after his birth. The family was struggling with the life-changing diagnosis. Candace said she and her husband, David, needed time to accept the reality of their situation.

"David and I had a lot of adjustment," she said.

She said the support her



Courtesy photos

Gideon Gabriel Michael Salim, 18 months, has cystic fibrosis, an incredibly rare disease. His mother, Candace Salim, cares for him full-time.

family has received has made all the difference for them.

"It's been really beautiful and an honor for so many people to care," she said.

She explained with such a rare disease, Gideon is the only infant in Union County with CF, making his care complicated.

"Any facility he's had to use in Union County has gone above and beyond to educate themselves on

keeping infection down, keeping him healthy, and what his needs are," Candace said.

She also said the people at Side A Brewing Co. in La Grande, where David works in the kitchen, have gone above and beyond to support them.

"David has found such an amazing family through Side A," Candace said. "Any

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SURVIVORS EMPOWERED

■ Local SART coalition helps sexual assault victims take trauma care into their own hands

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

One coalition has been giving power back to survivors of sexual assault in Union and Wallowa counties since 2004.

The Sexual Assault Response Team, otherwise known as SART, was formed in the early 2000s to provide a resource the area sorely lacked — a network of victim advocates, law enforcement representatives and sexual assault nurse examiners (or SANEs for short) dedicated to helping survivors in whatever capacity asked of them.

Providing a multi-disciplinary approach to empowering victims, the SART coalition consists of Shelter From the Storm,

From the Storm, a Union County organization providing support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, the Union County District Attorney's Office, La Grande Police Department, Union County Sheriff's Office, Eastern Oregon University and Grande Ronde Hospital.

According to Krista Evans, a crisis response advocate at Shelter From the Storm, SART services, which are offered 24 hours a day for people ages 15 and older, include advocacy, medical examinations and reports to law enforcement.

Evans said while a survivor may opt into any

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Schlichting

"In sexual assault, all the power has been taken away from the victim, and (SART) is just our way of being able to give back some of that power."
— Valerie Schlichting, victim assistance program director

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WEATHER

 Full forecast on the back of B section

Friday 38 Low A starry night
Saturday 72/42 Mostly sunny
Sunday 74/40 Mostly sunny

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La Grande, Oregon
Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.

MONDAY FIRE CAPTAIN STAN GROVE RETIRES

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