



Bill Bradshaw/EO Media Group

Caution tape warns trespassers about the dangers of the stairs at the aging Edelweiss Inn at the Wallowa Lake Village.

## INN

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it," Lockhart said. "I can't say we would turn down a very large grant, but that's what it would take."

He and Whittemore have owned the Edelweiss and the adjacent Wallowa Lake Tramway since 1984, along with the 14 acres they rest upon.

Lockhart and Whittemore have considered alternatives they were not willing to discuss but said they will know more sometime next month. They have been working with possible partners in the project for a couple of years.

One possibility is to dismantle the Edelweiss and use its unique materials in something smaller.

"We'd like to take a lot of the materials in that building to build something like a replica," Lockhart said.

Chuck Anderson, alpenmeister of the annual Oregon Alpenfest, looks favorably on the idea of a new venue that includes at least some historic vestiges of the old building. Until last fall the Alpenfest had taken place in the Edelweiss and on its grounds.

The Oregon State Parks Department has a revised

comprehensive plan that calls for a new event center to be part of the Wallowa Lake Marina parking lot, where the 2019 Alpenfest took place under rented tents. But it just won't be the same, Anderson said.

Anderson and Lockhart agreed there is a need for an events center at the lake such as the Edelweiss has been. In addition to the Alpenfest, it also served as a venue for weddings, meetings and a variety of gatherings.

"The Wallowa Lake Tourist Association (wants) to see how we could" restore it, Lockhart said.

However, he said, the tramway business is growing and it needs the parking, as does Wallowa Lake Village in general.

Lockhart and Anderson lamented the end of an era during which the Edelweiss hosted the Alpenfest since 1975, as well as dances and rollerskating in its 1920s-50s heyday.

"It'd be beautiful if we could continue to use it, but it's just too old," Anderson said. "I feel sad about that, but it's just a fact of life."

"I hate to see it deteriorate," Lockhart said. "Something's got to be done. It's just not a viable building."

## WALKOUT

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assigning Democrat Pam Marsh of Ashland, in his stead.

"Being a chair comes with an extra set of responsibilities and expectations," Kotek said in a statement. "Not only did Rep. Smith not come to work tonight, he didn't submit an excuse for his absence."

Smith later Tuesday night did not argue with Kotek.

"Most definitely the Speaker of the House has that authority," Smith said. "And I most definitely respect her decision."

He added Kotek is his friend and remains such, and he will assist Marsh in anyway he can. Smith stressed the no-show was not about disrespecting his colleagues on the other side of the political aisle but about trying to create some space and look at how proposals will affect districts such as his in Eastern Oregon.

The cap-and-trade bill to limit the state's greenhouse gas emissions is the legislation receiving the most attention this session. Smith said the bill has residents of the eastern part of the state feeling sincere concern about their livelihoods. Then Gov. Kate Brown came out in support of the removal of four dams on the Snake River, which could harm the ports of Umatilla and Morrow, along with power providers such as Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative and Umatilla Electric Cooperative.

But the topper, Smith said, came Tuesday when the House voted 42-16 in favor of House Bill 4075, which would make it against the law to conduct or participate in competitions that give cash or prizes for killing coyotes. Smith and fellow Republican Rep. Greg Barreto of Cove voted against.

The coyote hunting bill was a small matter, Smith said, and it likely has merit, but it was one more proposal that affects the residents of Oregon's east side.

"Eastern Oregon is feeling like we're under the gun," Smith said.

Opting to delay the session was not a choice Smith said he took lightly but was the way to grant more time to take a longer look at the scope of big



Anna Reed/The Associated Press

House Speaker Tina Kotek speaks Feb. 3 on the first day of the short legislative session at the Oregon Capitol in Salem. Kotek, D-Portland, took action Tuesday night to remove Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, as chair of a budget subcommittee after he and fellow House Republicans left in protest over contentious legislation.

legislation.

"I felt it was appropriate for us to push pause, step back and take a deep breath," he said.

After adjournment, House Democratic Leader Barbara Smith Warner of Portland described Republicans' absence as "the politics of obstruction."

"Those members who refuse to show up for work tonight and do their job are saying to a large majority of Oregonians: your voice doesn't matter and your vote doesn't matter," Smith Warner said in a statement. "Oregonians deserve much better."

Tuesday afternoon, House Republican Leader Christine Drahan, who took over the 22-member caucus in September, was opaque about the idea that Republicans are denying a quorum.

"We need to take time to look at these issues and give them our full consideration," Drahan said. "So it's not about denying quorum, but it absolutely is about setting a pace inside the building that allows for us to give all of these really big ideas in the short session their due."

Drahan's announcement came a day after Kotek said Monday the House would be holding more hearings, in response to Republicans' concerns, on a much-discussed proposal to cap the

state's greenhouse gas emissions. Cap and trade is the main course on the political menu this session, and it's an issue that riles many Republicans — and moderate Democrats.

In a written statement Tuesday, Kotek said Drahan notified her of the Republican caucus' intention to not attend this evening's session.

But Kotek pointed out she has obliged Republican insistence that each bill be read in its entirety, a tedious process that by late Tuesday afternoon had consumed nearly four hours of a House session.

Kotek said that's one reason she had scheduled an evening floor session for Tuesday.

"Our deadlines require that we move bills that have passed out of policy committees off the House floor by Thursday," Kotek said. "If the House Republican Caucus wants to continue reading bills tonight, that alone will require nearly three hours on the floor."

Republicans in the House have been refusing to suspend rules that require clerks to read the bills aloud line by line. It's a tactic the minority party can use to slow down the legislative process.

— Observer editor Phil Wright  
contributed to this article.

## SCOUTS

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to take care of anyone who may have been harmed. But in keeping that commitment, there has been a strain. And we want to make sure there is no end to scouting."

The Oregonian/OregonLive compiled a listing of more than 1,300 volunteers who were expelled from the national organization due to allegations. According to this report, none were from Union County.

The path to the bankruptcy proceedings can be traced back a decade to Portland, victims' lawyers say. A Multnomah County jury in 2010 awarded \$19.9 million damages to a Portland man abused as a Scout. It was the largest verdict against the group in its long history. The trial also triggered the public release of internal files kept for decades that revealed the identities and crimes of hundreds of known abusers.

"If the files were not released, the Boy Scouts would have, I think, been able to (financially) weather the storm," said Paul Mones, one of the lead attorneys on the case.

The files informed thousands of former Scouts about the pervasiveness of sexual abuse in the organization and the extent of the group's knowledge, he said. The records prompted hundreds of lawsuits, including several in Oregon.

But statutes of limitations precluded many former Scouts from filing legal claims. That changed recently when lawmakers in the populous states of California, New York and New Jersey opened a window for victims to sue regardless of when they were abused. A flood of claims followed.

The bankruptcy case will halt active lawsuits and, according to lawyers familiar with bankruptcy proceedings, likely will prevent future litigation tied to past abuse.

"If a Portland, Oregon, jury was able to award almost \$20 million to one person, if more trials were had around the country, the Boy Scouts just did the math," Mones said.

A Boy Scouts spokesperson could not be reached to discuss the filing. However, the group published a statement to its website.

"While we know nothing can undo the tragic abuse that victims suffered, we believe the Chapter 11 process — with the proposed trust structure — will provide equitable compensation to

all victims while maintaining the BSA's important mission," chief executive Roger Mosby said in the statement.

In the bankruptcy petition, the group said it had \$1 billion to \$10 billion in assets and \$500 million to \$1 billion in liabilities.

The bankruptcy case will require all victims to file claims with the federal bankruptcy court in Wilmington, Delaware, which will oversee a months-long process to add up the Boy Scouts' assets and determine how much victims will receive.

The Boy Scouts' files made public in Oregon indicate there may be several thousand victims of sexual abuse who may come forward to file claims, Mones said.

At least a handful of Oregon victims who have already sued will now have to file claims instead in the bankruptcy case.

A key issue during the bankruptcy will be how much local councils, like the five that operate in Oregon, have to contribute toward paying victims, said Peter Janci, a Portland lawyer who was also part of the 2010 Portland case. Janci and his law firm represent dozens of victims in current cases across the country and he said he plans to travel to Delaware to be on hand to follow the early bankruptcy proceedings.

He said he expects the Boy Scouts will ask the court to extend bankruptcy protections to local chapters, without each group having to officially file for bankruptcy. Janci said he believes local councils should help compensate victims in order to be protected from future lawsuits.

The same debate may also extend to organizations that sponsor Boy Scouts troops, such as churches and community clubs.

The national Boy Scouts, based in Texas, reported more than \$1 billion in assets in its latest tax-exempt filing. Four of the five regional councils in Oregon listed more than \$56 million worth of assets in their most recent filings. The Cascade Pacific Council holds three-quarters of those assets. The Portland-based council oversees 20,000 youth and 9,000 adult volunteers.

Although the branch reported more than \$40 million in assets for tax purposes, the true value of its holdings is unclear. For example, it reported the value of its land at \$322,000. County property records estimate the site of its Portland headquarters alone is worth more than \$3 million. The council also

owns land throughout Western Oregon where it operates camps, including a coastal property near Tillamook.

The council was at the center of the lawsuit that led to the historic verdict against the Scouts. During the trial, lawyers spent days going over the national organization's internal files that tracked reports of abuse on the local level.

Mones said he clearly remembers questioning an expert witness about one specific file, in which executives had concluded that a troop leader sleeping nude with Cub Scouts was not "sufficient reason" to permanently bar him.

"You could hear the oxygen go out of the room," Mones said. "It was so abhorrent to people."

The Boy Scouts tried to block the files from being disclosed after the verdict. But the Oregon Supreme Court sided with several news organizations, including The Oregonian/OregonLive, and ordered the files to be made public.

The files showed the public how the organization had long known about problems of sexual abuse and failed to take appropriate actions to protect children, Janci said.

The timing coincided with a shift in national consciousness away from blaming rogue bad actors to the institutions that enable them, Mones said. In its wake, many churches, schools and youth groups have faced claims from people who say they were abused as children by adults in positions of power. Portland private school Catlin Gabel is in the news this year for just that reason.

Some local and regional groups, including branches of the Catholic Church, have turned to bankruptcy before. Those cases provide a model for some aspects of the Boy Scouts case, such as how payments to individual victims might be determined, Mones said.

Janci said the bankruptcy trustee will appoint a group of victims to weigh in on the bankruptcy plan. Eventually, the court will set a date by which all victims need to file claims.

The court will decide between now and then how potential victims will be notified of their legal rights to file claims, Janci said.

Mones said if people do not file claims by the filing deadline, they likely will not be able to sue the Boy Scouts in the future.

— Observer reporter Sabrina Thompson  
contributed to this article.

## Thank You Chamber Members