

Local

Lefty's Taphouse opens soon

By Todd Arriola

Todd@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Lefty's Taphouse, an idea realized by Jason Spriet and Rick Stout, is a new business located at 1934 Broadway, former home to the Bull Ridge Brew Pub, with a soft opening planned for early March, and a grand opening later in the month.

Lefty's offers a variety of draft beers, plus wines and other bottled beverages. The tap system installed on the wall behind the bar is unique, a design inspired by The Falling Rock bar in Denver, Colorado, a display of alternating high and low taps and handles, 31 in total, which not only is an efficient use of the space, but is also visually interesting. An adjacent wall at the side of the bar will hold nine extra taps.

The beers on tap are mainly from breweries throughout the Northwest, Spriet said, covering the spectrum like stouts, ales, seasonal beers, etc., also including standards like Coors and Budweiser. A cooler on the premises holds bottled beer and soda, which customers can purchase for immediate or home use, and wine will also be sold. Growlers are also available for purchase for convenient home use.

Recognizing that this is a major agricultural community, and ranchers and farmers don't have a set daily work week schedule, Stout said that Lefty's Happy Hour will be a half hour before sunset until a half hour after sunset. "I feel like those people need to be recognized just as much as those working in the office 9 to 5," said Stout. A friend of Spriet's was in a bar in Alaska, and noticed this practice, which was the inspiration for the idea.

He commented about the style of the tap house, saying, "I want the guy that's been working cows all day to come in here, and feel comfortable getting a beer. But, also, if you're out on a date with your wife, and you're all dressed up, I want you to come in and feel comfortable, too. That's what I want, that atmosphere." Stout said he wants Lefty's to be able to cater to a variety of



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From left, Luke and Shay Stout, Jason and Renea Spriet, and Rick and Julie Stout.

customers, whether they're beer drinkers, wine drinkers, etc.

Stout talked about the creative ideas he and Spriet had in mind for décor, for example, pictures of famous left-handed sports athletes and celebrities, and possibly some local left-handed talent. The different mirrors on the walls are a personal, local touch of Stout's, familiar to members of the community, he said.

Spriet mentioned the assistance Tyler Brown and others from Barley Brown's provided, saying they were very helpful with details concerning the tap system. Some of Barley's beers will be on tap, Spriet said. He said he also received a lot of help from others, including representatives of P&E Distributing Company, and Graybeal Distributing Company.

The food offered will be higher quality snack-type items, like nachos, pretzels, hot dogs, etc., he said. Spriet and Stout plan on expanding the available food items in the near future.

"This whole idea was conceived on a camping trip last year," Spriet said. He and Stout have been home brewing since 2008, and the idea came naturally to them. They formed 10 Bucks, Inc., last year, which is an homage to Spriet's uncle, whose

CB handle was 10 Bucks. "He was an inspiration for all of us," Spriet said. The name Lefty's sounded catchy to the family, and caught on with them, primarily because several are left-handed, including Luke, Rick's son, who will be bartending at Lefty's. "Coming up with a name is one of the hardest things you'll do," Stout said.

It was all hands on deck, as Spriet, Stout, and family members, including Janet and Larry Spriet, Jason's parents, and Julie Stout, Rick's wife, began demolition of the space in November, and then construction in December. The center wall was removed, creating a more open area, and an enclosure was built around the ducting in the middle of the space. The walls and ceiling were repainted, and new laminate, commercial-grade flooring with a hardwood look was installed, with a separately floored area along the west wall for live music bands. New lighting was installed, along with new ceiling fans, and four, 50" flat screen TVs.

A cooler room was built in the kitchen area by Stout, and the stainless steel cleaning equipment was purchased from the County, removed from the former Extension Service building. The cooler door itself is from Little Susie's Meat Market, owned by Stout's father, Spriet said.

Part of the old bar was kept, and moved to the northwest corner of the space, and now has a custom-made top of hickory flooring, framed with mahogany, and includes oak and cedar, all sealed with epoxy, constructed by Stout and the others. The tables themselves, some in pub table height and some in normal table height, have tops that were made at Marvin Wood Products from finger-jointed pine discards, also framed with mahogany, and sealed with epoxy.

Spriet said Oregon Sign Company created the classic-styled graphics for the front windows, and supplied the metal plate used to burn the name Lefty's into the table tops before they were epoxied. "We want to add an awning at some point," Spriet said, also noting how the external and internal brickwork adds to the appeal and classic look of the building, originally constructed in 1930.

"We really just want to do it right, as much as we can," said Spriet, paying tribute to Lefty's slogan, Stout's idea: We Do It Right At Lefty's.

For more information about Lefty's, including updated schedules and beverage availability, check out leftystaphouse.com, and Lefty's Taphouse on Facebook.

Hearing held in Langrell case

By Kerry McQuisten

News@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Last Friday afternoon beginning at 2 p.m., Judge Ron Pahl of Umatilla presided over a hearing request by the attorney for former mayor Richard Langrell, as part of his lawsuit against the City of Baker City.

Judge Baxter recused himself from the hearing, which was brought by video conference into the Baker County Circuit Court.

Langrell's attorney, Rebecca Knapp of Enterprise, presented two motions: one for a partial summary judgement in the case that essentially would give Langrell the win without a trial, and another to divide the three claims in the case into separate trials—two claims going before a judge as a bench trial, the other to be heard by a jury.

Brent Smith, the La Grande attorney for the City of Baker City, argued against both motions, asking the court to rule to allow all three claims to continue to move forward and be heard before a jury on April 2-3.

Dating back as far as 1998, the properties around Langrell's Always Welcome Inn, as well as Langrell's, became involved in the early stages of an annexation process by the City. Langrell, in his deposition, contends when he learned his neighbors were offered a 10-year moratorium on City taxes, he wanted the same deal for the annexation of his property into the City limits. He said he was unaware for a period precisely what deal had been offered to his neighbors only to subsequently learn the details of some of their deals, which is why, in 2000, he refused to sign the City's consent request for the annexation of his property.

The City contends that Langrell, by refusing to sign that request, violated an agreement he signed in 1998 setting utility rates and also allowing the City to begin the annexation process at any point in time, which they would decide.

In 2004, several discussions with then-City attorney Tim Collins and other officials at the City during that time culminated in a December City Council meeting, which in turn resulted in a four-page mailing that included a cover letter and annexation form sent from Collins to Langrell.

The question, which would be determined at trial—or not, if the summary judgement is awarded—is whether Langrell's agreement with the City stipulated that he pay double sewer and water fees in exchange for that 10-year tax moratorium, or whether the agreement was to give the 10-year moratorium without requiring the double fees.

The annex consent form, which Langrell signed and turned in during the weeks following that December 2004 City Council meeting, is "silent" on the topic of sewer and water fees, stating only he was to be granted the tax moratorium. The cover letter from Collins, however, does include wording regarding those utility fees.

Both sides acknowledge that discussions about the double sewer and fees occurred during private meetings between Langrell and the City, and is documented in public City Council minutes. The minutes, however, do not include many specifics on the agreement to be sent to Langrell for signing.

Langrell testified in his deposition that he believed the language of Collin's cover letter was in error, but said he signed the form, taking it independently from the cover letter.

The City contends that the agreement included the language in that cover letter. Smith stated that all of Langrell's neighbors have paid double sewer and water fees even though some of their annex consent forms mentioned the fees and others were silent on the matter, as Langrell's was.

Langrell received double sewer and water bills, which he paid. However, he also attempted to visit with two City Managers after that time, and Steve Broccato especially, he said, was uninterested in speaking with him.

In 2007, Langrell approached the City Council stating he believed he was being inappropriately double-billed.

The hearing ended at 3:20 p.m. Judge Pahl said he would "take the matter under advisement." He will render his decision on Knapp's two motions in writing sometime before the set trial date.

Langrell is seeking a refund for half the utility bill amount paid over the past 10 years, an injunction preventing those double-fees from being reinstated in the future, and a ruling that the City breached the original 1998 agreement.

Strange lights in the night sky

The police scanner and social media blew up Monday night with reports

of strange "unidentified" objects in the evening sky over Baker City.

The first, around 6 p.m. was reported as a bright, reflective object—not quite a star, not quite an airplane, which turned out to be a brief sighting of the International Space Station.

Then around 10 p.m. to the southeast, the body of a Chinese rocket entered the

Earth's atmosphere over Utah, but was visible all across eastern Oregon as well.

Onlookers said the rocket part looked like a fireball with multiple pieces disintegrating and traveling rapidly across the horizon.

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Man arraigned for elder abuse

A Baker City man was arraigned this week in Baker County Circuit Court on multiple charges related to elder abuse.

Kenny Lee Hellman, 46, of 344 Spring Garden Ave., was indicted Feb. 19 on several counts related to charges that he withdrew money from an elderly victim's bank account on multiple occasions between January 2014 and April 2014, without the victim's permission.

He is also alleged to have forged multiple checks belonging to the victim to get cash.

Hellman is being held at the Baker County Jail on \$97,500 bail.