

# Local

## Crossroads final expansion outreach meeting held

• FINANCIAL ISSUES ADDRESSED

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Thursday evening a small crowd gathered for the final outreach meeting being conducted by architect Larry Abell in a feasibility study that would expand Crossroad Arts Center.

The Welch building directly across the street from the current Crossroads building is being examined for the expansion however as Abell said, "It is just what we are assessing currently, if there is space someplace else that would work better for the needs these meetings identify we'll look at those spaces also."

Abell, along with Crossroads Executive Director, Ginger Savage have hosted two prior meetings regarding the study.

These two meetings spawned lot of great ideas. The first group came up with ideas like creating a media center where things like recording voice-overs, producing commercials or creating a radio station could be done.

A media center might encompass some online art school opportunities also.

That group discussed expanding culinary arts programs and perhaps including a Bistro with the addition of a rooftop garden being utilized for that.

They spoke about the possibility of space that could support an artist in residence program allowing for on-site living quarters as an exciting opportunity.

They also brought up expanding outdoor activities and expanding performing arts space.

The relocation of the dance studio was brought up as way to expand exhibit and sales space and the need for storage was discussed.

The second group also had ideas about the use of outdoor space by creating a "plaza" that could be used for extra parking when needed but could also be optimized for things like a hosing a rotating sculpture showcase and other art festivals, outdoor classes and demonstrations like blacksmithing, Raku firing for pottery or plein painting.

This group also mentioned using the outdoor space to bring the farmers market back to the "core" of the City and possibly even hosting events such as the highland games.

The rooftop garden was brought up by this group as well however their idea included having plants and



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Ginger Savage and Larry Abell hold a discussion at the third and final outreach meeting regarding Crossroads' potential expansion.

flowers that could be used to create natural dyes for Fiber Arts.

The idea of moving the dance classes was suggested by this group as well noting that in doing so it would expand exhibit space and sales space.

The second group also identified the need for private, quiet meeting and office space. A place for some of the messier arts was mentioned with Savage saying, "A sloped floor with a drain you could just spray down would be lovely."

The floor in the current location is historic hand scrapped wood flooring. The issue of storage was brought up again noting the current location has very little to no storage and adequate storage space is needed.

The second group also suggested space for music classes, having a space for rehearsals and performances. Acoustics and specialized lighting were identified as needs for creating space to accommodate this.

Having better ADA accessibility was another topic discussed by this group noting in the current location only one ADA bathroom is available and it is located upstairs.

If an after-hours event is happening in an area downstairs the persons requiring access to the ADA bathroom must ride the elevator upstairs into the "closed" portion of the building thus bringing up security questions regarding valuable items in the gallery, not that there have been any issues but it is a cause for concern.

Before the third group began identifying new ideas, they addressed some questions that no other group had—for example how would additional space be staffed?

Having additional space would require additional staff, which in turn would require additional funding. Had that been considered? Funding is already tight.

Another question raised was about the current space possibly being under-utilized. How could the space they currently have be used in a way that would not require additional space?

Again, the storage issue was addressed as a very large issue for the Center currently.

Savage spoke to the group that was focused more on the financial aspect of expanding rather than nurturing ideas of what could be in the future with an expansion.

She said, "If for example, we moved dance classes to a larger space we could have bigger classes and more classes. Those bring in money. I get asked for more classes all the time, I could have dance classes every night of the week. Same with some other classes, I would say twenty-percent of revenue comes from classes."

It stands to reason that increasing classes offered and class sizes would increase revenue.

Savage also told those present, "This is an old building, the glass in the windows is the original glass, over 100 years old. It is irreplaceable. I would love to have space that lent itself to kids being kids without me constantly having to remind children to be careful."

Once the group began to understand the challenges with the current location and the reasons Savage, with the help of Abell, is looking at expansion they became a bit more forthcoming with ideas.

This group asked Abell what some of the ideas from the other groups had

been. He said, "I don't want to share. I want each group to focus on their own ideas and then if I hear things that keep coming up in each group I will know that is what I need to focus on."

The group came up with ideas that included hosting writing workshops, creating an indoor space to paint murals and large open space to possibly host convention type events and even having New Hope for Eastern Oregon Animals fundraisers in the space.

The group, as with previous groups felt with the moving of the dance studio that would open up exhibit and sales space in the current location, more sales of course would increase revenue.

The idea of possibly being able to host more custom large piece exhibits was mentioned.

With the additional outdoor space parking was addressed as was using the space for dual purposes and perhaps creating an outdoor theater.

The current space the pottery studio was located in was mentioned for the first time.

It was suggested that more space would be a wonderful attribute however questioning the space for the pottery studio raised the question as to whether moving it to a different location was the best option or not.

Abell indicated his findings for the study would be completed by the end of December and presented to the Crossroads Board of Directors.

He does plan on making his study information available to those that are interested as well in another open house before he presents to the board.

## Huntington: medical marijuana dispensary allowed in City

BY EILEEN DRIVER  
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A special meeting was held on Tuesday, November 24 at 6:00 p.m. for the City of Huntington City Council to finally once and for all make a decision on the Marijuana issue.

A packed crowd gathered in the City Hall Council Chambers to once again voice their opinions and hopefully sway the Council to their side.

At the end of the meeting the Council was split 3-3 on the decision not to ban marijuana business, with Mayor Travis Young making the tie-breaking decision based on the need to bring in much-needed economic development and City revenues by allowing marijuana businesses in the City limits of Huntington.

The Council will now start to work on a Time, Place and Manner Ordinance to regulate such businesses as wish to open here, as well as work on getting the sales tax on the ballot for the next election.

The Council has wrestled with this issue for over five months in both regular Council meetings and special meetings with no clear resolution in site. In September of this year the Council voted 4-2 to ban marijuana dispensaries and retail stores but with no decision on any other related businesses. This was not a well received decision by the majority of the Huntington residents and immediately afterward, petitions started circulating asking for the Council to change their minds.

Threats of recall for those that voted for the ban were talked about as well.

Citizens from all ages and walks of life, both smokers and nonsmokers, stopped council members on the street and came into City Hall saying, "We need the tax money—no ban."

The Council held firm to its decision until the Council meeting held on November 17th when Councillor Rhonda Bronson presented the Council with the fact that a Medical Dispensary license had already been approved by the state for a company planning to open in Huntington and would be grandfathered in and not affected by the ban under State law. That the Ordinance necessary to ban, which was to be voted on that night, would not take effect in time to stop it.

At that time after much more discussion, the council voted again and all present were stunned when the Council voted 4-2 not to go through with the ban but to work on Time place and manner and tax ordinances instead.

Immediately after that vote, Councilor Chuck Guerri commented, "I feel like we have been stalled through this whole process just to make this happen." But when asked by the Mayor who he felt was stalling the process, he could not give an answer and most present went home saying, "What just happened here?"

To end the discussions, confusion and bad feelings all the way around, and to settle the matter once and for all, Mayor Young set a Special Meeting for November 24 at which the Council would be able to talk to City Attorney Larry Sullivan, get all the legal facts and make up their minds.

At the start of the meeting Mayor Young told the Council, "I am tired of the discussions and the back and forth on this issue. A final decision has to be made."

After over an hour of questions and answers back and forth to the Attorney by the Mayor, Council and spectators, covering just about all aspects of state law versus federal law versus city law it was learned that yes the medical marijuana dispensary that has been approved by the state to open in Huntington would be grandfathered in, but that all other businesses could be banned as well as any other dispensaries. Trying to stop the already approved dispensary from opening would mean long litigation such as Ontario and several other cities are involved in and that if the City bans and the people of Huntington had that decision overturned thru a vote of the people that all revenue from taxes would be lost.

When no one could think of another question to ask, the Council was asked again to state their opinions on whether or not marijuana businesses should be allowed in the City of Huntington.

The opinions were as follows:

Councilor Jack Gerould said they should be allowed; Councillor Cindy Deck said they should not be allowed; Councilor Carol Allender said they should be allowed; Councilor Eileen Driver said they should be allowed; Councillor Chuck Guerri said they should not be allowed; and Councillor Rhonda Bronson said they should not be allowed. This split left Mayor Young in the position of tie-breaker with the final decision.

The crowd waited with anticipation to hear his opinion. Mayor Young, who had not voiced an opinion on this subject through all five months of debate and indecision, calmly stated, "It's here. It's been here for years and it's not going away no matter the vote. We need the economic boost and revenue these businesses will generate. We need the money. They should be allowed."

The ban on the ban was upheld. Final answer.

## Emergency Preparedness takes to social media

The Oregon Office of Emergency Management will be using #TalkTurkey on social media this week to focus on family emergency preparedness. Use #TalkTurkey on twitter @OregonOEM and Facebook at facebook.com/OMDOEM.

Geologic Hazard Coordinator Althea Rizzo says it is a good idea to have an out of town contact with an

easy access contact label like "IEQtext" pre-programmed in your mobile phone.

"I would like folks to ask after an earthquake, if they can only text one person, who would it be and what would they say," she added?

Furthermore, OEM is supporting a social media campaign to encourage holiday travelers to stay

safe though the new year. The campaign has tips for families, pet owners, smartphone users, and people traveling domestically by car and plane, and internationally.

Here are three tips from the campaign:

- Pack a small emergency kit for your suitcase. Batteries, a flashlight, a portable radio and USB power bank are good items

to start with.

- Download FEMA's app, which lets you receive weather alerts for up to five locations—set one for your holiday destination to stay informed.

- Use STEP, the Department of State's the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program if you're traveling abroad. This will help the U.S. Embassy contact you in an emergency.

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