

Weather woes



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Contractors for Oregon Dept. of Transportation work to replace a section of guardrail that was destroyed during the early morning hours of Friday, Jan. 19, at the “first bridge” on Hwy. 199 from a single vehicle incident caused by black ice. No injuries were reported.

County planning colludes with IVCDO in store opposition

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According to a county public records request, which procured email correspondence between community development director Julie Schmelzer and the Illinois Valley Community Development Organization’s (IVCDO) development coordinators Kenny Houck and Kate Dwyer, the IVCDO has been in close contact with the Jo Co Planning Department regarding the proposed land partition which will result in a Grocery Outlet. Schmelzer admittedly has no real jurisdiction on the manner since the lot in question, which is between Shop Smart and the Junction Inn, is within Cave Junction city limits. She further added that she sides with the IVCDO, who opposes Grocery Outlet’s construction at the proposed site and advocates for the city to strengthen its lax and outdated development codes.

The IVCDO conducted an expensive grant funded feasibility study which aimed to determine what was best for the community’s position regarding the property on where the Junction Inn currently resides, and found that it was a new hotel that could create a lucrative return on investment. Should a Grocery Outlet be constructed on the lot, the study will no longer be viable. Oddly enough, Houck appeared to admit via a nod during the Jan. 18 hearing that they never, at any point, included the current owners of the property in on the study.

The IVCDO’s official position is that Grocery Outlet should locate itself on the north end of town near Dollar General, primarily because of their study’s findings.

An Illinois Valley News Facebook poll revealed that 91 percent of those who voted on the survey think that Grocery Outlet should be allowed to build next to Shop Smart. Two other public social media polls conducted by members of the community yielded similar statistics.

Main and Main LLC, the developer who wants to build the Grocery Outlet and who’s also said they’re interested in building a multistory hotel

where the Junction Inn now stands—should they reach an agreement with the current owner—is altogether uninterested and unresponsive to the IVCDO’s requests since they are not, at least in this circumstance, a legally binding entity. According to their “metrics,” the lot in question is the only location in town that works for them.

Land use codes cannot be passed retroactively after an application is submitted which protects potential developers from unforeseen stipulations. Cave Junction’s city planner Dick Converse, after having consulted with Southern Oregon’s regional representative Josh LeBombard from the Department of Land Conservation and Development, said that the city would most likely lose if the developer went to the Land Use Board of Appeals after having been denied.

Mayor Daniel Dalegowski said that discussions regarding a comprehensive land use code update will likely occur after Main and Main’s land use hearing is completed but he further noted that it won’t be entirely based on the IVCDO’s 20/20 Strategic Plan.

Unsurprisingly, Shop Smart has sided with the IVCDO in agreeing that the location is unwise and has also insinuated that the city should create a stipulation that would require Grocery Outlet to come up with a comprehensive plan for assisting in redeeming bottles and cans. Dalegowski says that legally enforcing this is unlikely because it may qualify as an additional criteria post application. Evidence suggests that Shop Smart redeems \$700 a day in bottle taxes and that the service is more or less a burden on their business.

Karen Chase, an IVCDO director, believes that Grocery Outlet could, with what she considers inferior products, underprice Shop Smart enough to drive them out of the area, resulting in the loss of a full-service grocer. In the same email chain Dwyer accused Shop Smart’s corporate office of price gouging but expressed her sympathy for the management in their heroic community efforts over the years.

Hanby hash oil goes up in smoke

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There was some degree of contention recently among the residents of Hanby Lane when they discovered that the green industrial buildings near their homes could potentially become host to a butane hash oil extraction company. However, it’s been confirmed that the deal has been called off.

Larry Osborne, the investment developer responsible for the deal, briefly mentioned the plans with the city and Mayor Daniel Dalegowski but the extent of the conversation was so minimal that it was barely of any consequence. “Larry has a history with the city of coming in and making plans and doing all this stuff and talking a lot and then never coming back,” city recorder Becky Patton said, further adding that that’s part of his job. Patton added that the city hasn’t received any paperwork and, because of that, didn’t spend any energy on the situation.

However, in response to what could have been a potentially dangerous extraction facility operating near a residential area, Dalegowski said that the city might consider additional regulations for hydrocarbon based businesses. “We’ve got a regularly scheduled council meeting scheduled for the second Monday in February,” Dalegowski said, adding that under the current code the butane hash oil business would have been completely legal, “This isn’t 100 percent but we may have a very brief council meeting prior to that just to enact something or start the process.”

The city council, Dalegowski added, will likely consult with Illinois Valley Fire Chief Dennis Hoke with regards to how far he thinks such a business should be set back from a residential zone.

Dalegowski continued on by adding that professionally regulated facilities rarely present any serious hazards though, according to him, there have been isolated incidents elsewhere in the past. “It’s just such a difference between the guy in his garage with the cans of butane blasting a tube of trim or something versus these operations with the closed loop.”

For now, Dalegowski and Osborne reported that there’s no plans for the buildings in the immediate future but that they would both like to see them occupied with a suitable business.

Grocery Outlet spells out timeline

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Grocery Outlet’s vice president of real estate Marc Drasin spoke out Monday afternoon, saying that unexpected delays in getting their land partition approved is forcing them to fall behind schedule. Drasin said that the constantly recalculating of their deadline has been playing havoc with what they thought was a solid plan.

Further explaining himself he went on to add that Grocery Outlet has a certain number of stores they need to open by years end to meet their bottom line. “We’re just trying to regroup,” Drasin said, regarding the unexpected resistance.

According to Drasin, Grocery Outlet is looking forward to creating 30-40 new jobs in the community as well as doing their best to support local groups, clubs and churches. He also added that they’re planning to allow people to use their parking lot to host events.

In an attempt to satisfy certain community requests, Drasin added that their company is going to tailor the building and landscaping to the local style and that it will, in addition to all the equipment necessary to run the store,

cost them a couple of million dollars. In addition, the Grocery Outlet will raise a considerable amount of tax dollars for the city to spend at their leisure. “Our business is to make people happy. We want to do what you guys like. We thought we were doing that and then—I don’t know what happened there. We’re trying our best to make everybody happy.”

Grocery Outlet took their time in researching the proposed location and chose it because it has a good deal of automobile traffic, is at stop light and because it’s close to people’s homes. He also added that if people can’t find everything that they want at Grocery Outlet, because their selection varies from week to week, they can simply walk to Shop Smart and finish off their list.

Should things progress smoothly from here on out, Drasin said that they’ll be up and running within a relatively short period of time, likely before the end of the year. Essentially, all the paperwork has been filed and the only step left is to construct the building and then open their doors.

“We’re looking forward to it and hopefully we can do it.”

Cougar basketball in final stretch for playoffs.

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