

## Windows: ‘Program provides a good opportunity’

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He got in touch with McGrath and Lucien Swerdloff, the coordinator and one of the founders of the college program, who were thrilled to move forward.

“We wouldn’t really have known about this without Ed,” McGrath said. “... We want to get that building back to its original shape because it has good bones to it, it has just been neglected for a lot of years. We want to get that back up to good shape so that it looks really good, and gives a good face to Ed.”

During two weekend workshops with one more to go, the students have removed several windows to work on them. After dusting off the 40 years of sawdust, Swerdloff said, the students began restoring sashes, cleaning up and oiling the jambs, replacing broken glass and repairing rotten wood, among several other tasks.

Many of the windows, Swerdloff said, have not been operable for a long time.

McGrath estimates there are around 48 windows on the building, and since the students will only get around to restoring six of them, Swerdloff thought it would be a good idea for some of the Port’s employees to sit in on the workshop.

“The idea was to train our students, but also to train some of their employees so they can take the project



Clatsop Community College

**The historic preservation program at Clatsop Community College has helped prepare students to enter the industry.**

over and continue working on the windows afterwards,” Swerdloff said.

McGrath, along with another Port employee, attended the workshop last weekend. He believes the complete restoration of all the windows will take several years.

“It’s a really labor-intensive process to bring these wood windows back to original glory,” McGrath said.

On top of being advantageous for the community, Overbay and Swerdloff view the college program as benefiting the next generation of workers.

“The program provides a good opportunity for stu-

dents and gives them a lot of chances to go on for further education or look for jobs,” Swerdloff said. “We are really community-focused. Obviously, we are a community college, but really that is part of our mission — to be out in the community, engage people and help the community and just be involved with building owners, people and local contractors.”

Among those who have completed the program and moved on into the industry is Chris Gustafson, the owner of Vintage Window Restoration in Albany.

Gustafson, who Swerdloff considers one of the main

window restoration experts in the state, is the instructor of the workshops and the wood restoration course.

He remains grateful for a program that redirected his career during the Great Recession in 2008.

“In the sense of taking what I learned and actually practicing it as a business and being dedicated to it, and then taking what I’ve learned and sharing it with others,” Gustafson said. “... I don’t see it as a job, but as community service.”

“To be born and raised in that town, go through the program and start a career in it then come back and teach — it’s just fantastic.”

## Economy: Inflation eating into some gains

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McMullen said tax collections so far are exceeding the close-of-session forecasts set when lawmakers put together the 2021-23 state budget in June. Under Oregon’s kicker law, amounts that exceed the forecast by 2% or more go back to taxpayers, or in the case of businesses, into the school fund.

Taxpayers will see credits amounting to a record \$1.9 billion when they file 2021 tax returns in 2022. The \$847 million in excess corporate income taxes was added to the two-year \$9.3 billion school fund.

McMullen and senior economist Josh Lehner spoke as the Oregon Employment Department released the state’s October unemployment rate, which dipped to 4.4% from 4.7% in September. Oregon’s economy continued to add jobs, but the agency also reported that growth has slowed since summer.

Oregon is still 70,000 jobs below its pre-pandemic peak — the state’s unemployment rate shot up from a record-low 3.5% in March 2020 to an adjusted 13.2% the following month after businesses closed or curtailed operations — and the Employment Department said 30,000 of those still-unrecovered jobs were in restaurants, bars and hotels, known as the leisure and hospitality sector.

But many workers moved into higher-paying jobs in other sectors, such as transportation and warehousing — and employers are paying higher wages. “As a result, we are seeing income tax collections reflecting it,” McMullen said.

Inflation is eating into some of those gains, though Lehner said workers earning less than \$20 per hour are still seeing real growth

in wages, but those earning more are feeling the pinch.

“We are in this supply-constrained economy where there are inflationary pressures much higher than we have seen in 30 years,” he said.

While some inflationary pressures are short term, such as the production of goods that has not yet caught up with consumer demand, Lehner said Oregon still faces long-term issues such as the lack of lower-cost housing. Housing sales prices and rents have continued to go up.

McMullen and Lehner did reinforce Employment Department reports that Oregon’s rural counties, not its big cities, have led the recovery from the pandemic. During 2020, median income growth in the 18 counties east of the Cascades was around 15% — double the U.S. median of 7.6% — while it was lowest in Benton County and Washington County, which have the state’s highest per-capita incomes.

Lehner said all Oregonians benefited from federal transfer payments such as stimulus checks, enhanced unemployment benefits and an expanded child tax credit. The first two have ended, and President Joe Biden’s Build Back Better plan proposes to extend the third for another year.

“A lot of these counties started with a low-income base. When you add these transfer payments ... it led to large percentage increases,” Lehner said.

“But our traditionally highest-income, lowest-unemployment counties lagged behind the U.S. median because it is a much smaller share in high-income areas.”

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## Sture: ‘I’m not going to fall anymore’

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A psychologist who evaluated Sture before this week’s hearing diagnosed him with antisocial personality traits and a host of substance use disorders involving alcohol, stimulants, cannabis and heroin.

John Bailey, the parole board member who led the hearing, read from the psychologist’s report, which concluded that Sture’s risk of violent behavior was low, but that the risk goes up if he starts drinking or using drugs.

Sture told the other board members present — Greta Lowry and James Taylor — that he has been clean for almost two years.

This time frame, Bailey pointed out, isn’t that long; the board often interviews inmates with many more years of sobriety behind them.

Given how often Sture has relapsed while incarcerated, Bailey said he has to decide how likely Sture is to relapse once he is back in the community. “I want to be transparent with you and tell you that I’m concerned about that,” he told Sture.

“I’m not going down that road anymore,” Sture responded. “I am not going to hurt anybody the way I hurt Sgt. Shepherd. I can’t do that. I won’t do that.”

Taylor pointed out that drugs are easier to obtain outside of prison than they are inside — and marijuana is now legal in Oregon.

“What do you think it will take to keep you sober?” Taylor asked Sture.

“Conviction,” Sture replied. “Conviction and work. I’m not going to fall anymore.”

Sture said he planned to find a job, take advantage of mental health programs and join Marion County’s Narcotics Anonymous community.

His close relatives attended the hearing. His sister, Cindy Wiggins, said that

her family will help Sture if the board grants him parole.

“If any of us thought that Mike would be dangerous to be released into society, we would most certainly not be making this statement today,” Wiggins said.

The religious studies group that Sture has been involved with in prison also said they would support him.

“We live in a society that believes in the rule of law, the importance of the rule of law, and for that reason, we incarcerate people who make serious errors,” said Douglas Parker, a volunteer with the religious studies group. “But we also look at the rehabilitation and the reentry, the reclamation of these lives that (is) possible.”

### ‘Incomprehensible’

Sandra Bierschied, Shepherd’s daughter, was 14 when her dad was murdered. She said she “heard the shots in the distance that took his life.”

“I had reoccurring nightmares that (Sture) is outside my house with a gun shooting at my family,” she said. “And these nightmares are part of who I am now.”

When she wakes up, she at least has “the security of knowing that this man is in prison and this helps me move forward every day.”

“The thought of this man being paroled is incomprehensible.”

Brown said that Sture should remain locked up because of “the enormity of the crime.”

“This was not a drunk-driving crash or something like that,” Brown said. “This was monumental.”

Brown said Sture allegedly told one of his friends who was interviewed about the original crime that “it would be easy to kill someone on a motorcycle.” Brown maintains that Shepherd’s murder was “arguably a ‘thrill kill.’”

And that’s very concerning

because that could reoccur.

“He was executed, Jim Shepherd was, in cold blood,” Brown continued. “We only have Mr. Sture to tell us whether he ever suffered much after he was shot the first time until he was executed by two shots to the head.”

Calling Sture a “potential time bomb waiting to go off with his drug and alcohol issues,” Brown asked the board to push back his parole for at least two more years, “to give him time to build a better track record.”

Sarah Shepherd, Shepherd’s grandniece, is a deputy district attorney in Clatsop County. She wasn’t yet born when her uncle died. But she became a prosecutor, she said, “definitely in part because of what happened to my family, and the generational trauma that our family has gone through because of what happened to my uncle.”

“Everything about this process is why I became a prosecutor, because I don’t want other families to suffer as mine has suffered,” she said.

She noted that, after more than four decades in prison, Sture was still at step No. 4 of the 12-step Narcotics Anonymous and isn’t active in the program at the moment.

“From the work that I’ve done in drug treatment programs, Mr. Sture is not someone we would even consider for graduation,” let alone “released from prison,” she said.

If the parole board releases Sture, she said, it will put him in the same position he was in in 1980.

“He knows that when he relapses and when he fails, when he commits a new crime, he’ll be facing coming back to prison. And he now knows more about prison than he did when he was 24. He knows how terrible it is.”

“So what’ll happen to the next person who catches

him?” she continued. “If it’s his PO (parole officer) walking up to his residence and he has drugs there, if it’s a police officer doing a traffic stop when he’s chosen to abscond, what’s going to happen? I know what’s going to happen.”

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Sandra Bierschied | daughter of Sgt. James D. Shepherd