

UMATILLA

Council keen on outlet mall, Old Town development

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The city of Umatilla is looking to take a greater role in economic development as city councilors and staff meet together in a series of goal-setting sessions.

City Manager Russ Pelleberg said he has been working with the county, the Port of Umatilla, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Business Oregon on some projects in "very, very preliminary stages" that could bring more businesses in to the area.

"There are many pieces of the puzzle in motion," he said. Pelleberg said one of those efforts has been to start actively marketing available land to companies that might be a good fit, offering up detailed information packets about everything from the amount of traffic passing by each day to the infrastructure in place.

On Tuesday, during a workshop to discuss councilors' goals for the city, one type of business everyone wanted to set their sights on was an outlet mall. Councilors and staff pointed out that a collection of brand-name stores not found in the

Tri-Cities had the potential to draw people from there who were looking for nearby deals with no sales tax attached.

Mayor Dave Trott said at the meeting that the city needed to foster local entrepreneurship but also look afield for opportunities.

"It's not necessarily people in our back yard who have got the interest," he said.

Pelleberg told councilors that it would take "a lot more than a phone call" to bring an outlet mall to Umatilla but it didn't mean they shouldn't work on it.

He told the *East Oregonian* that he has been looking with engineers at what will be needed to bring water to some of the properties in the urban growth boundary along Highway 395. Construction there often is not feasible because of a lack of the water necessary for fire suppression.

Pelleberg also said he and councilor Mark Ribich have teamed up to start talking to each local business owner, asking what the city can do to help them thrive, and asking what the city could do to help fill empty storefronts. They're also planning on "cleaning up" the language in

the city's codes and then making a more concerted effort to enforce them. He said pushing for clean-up of eyesores will help make the city more attractive to potential businesses.

Another common theme in the list of goals submitted by city councilors is partnering with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to re-open the Old Town Site to the public. The land, now held by the Army Corp of Engineers, holds significance as a historical site both to the tribes and to the city, which packed up and moved from the land 50 years ago in anticipation of flooding from the John Day Dam.

The CTUIR and the city have been working with the Corps to gain permission to remove invasive species and place nature trails and historical kiosks through the site.

The city is also helping the tribes with a road project in the port area that will open 195 acres up for development. Pelleberg said since he has become city manager, the city and port have buried the hatchet and he has a great working relationship with Port of Umatilla Director Kim Puzey, along with other entities such

as the city of Hermiston.

"There's a lot of teamwork happening here," he said.

The city is also starting discussions with the Army Corp of Engineers about the possibility of taking ownership of more land near Umatilla.

"There's a fair amount of Corps land in the urban growth boundary that is just sitting vacant," he said.

The city council would also like to start focusing more on parks and recreation. Currently Pelleberg, in his dual role of city manager and public works director, oversees the city's parks, which he has been working to expand and improve. But the city does not have a recreation program or a recreation director in place. Pelleberg said it's time for the city to start "investing in itself" by creating some city-run recreational programs for youth and possibly adults, too.

City councilors were asked recently to submit a list of goals they were interested in seeing the city pursue, and Tuesday was their second work session to discuss the list. Other things on the list included helping the Umatilla Fire Department establish long-term funding

support, helping staff pursue more certifications, enhancing community events, making downtown businesses' signs more uniform, promoting "Umatilla Pride," adding benches to the Third Street walking path, creating a committee education program for new committee members, writing a five-year capital improvement plan, rebranding the city, improving the city website and developing the RV park and marina to their full potential.

Pelleberg said they didn't have an official number of items they wanted on a final list, but it was helpful to weed out items that weren't feasible and to get a feel for councilors' top priorities and how those priorities might be accomplished. He said the city was going to work hard on increasing livability and attractiveness to businesses, but some items would require time to deal with federal regulations or secure funding.

"This is going to be a time-consuming thing, and it's not going to happen overnight," he said.

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AP Photo/David Zalubowski

Dana Zzyym, of Fort Collins, Colo., left, and Paul D. Castillo, staff attorney of the South Central regional office of Lambda Legal, emerge after delivering arguments in a hearing on Zzyym's lawsuit requiring people to pick a gender to get a passport in the U.S. Federal Courthouse early Wednesday in Denver.

Judge urges U.S. to grant gender neutral passport

DENVER (AP) — A federal judge on Wednesday urged the State Department to give a gender neutral passport to a Colorado Navy veteran who does not identify being male or female in a case that's the first of its kind in the United States.

U.S. District Judge R. Brooke Jackson also suggested he might issue an order forcing the government to do so if it does not successfully negotiate a settlement to the legal challenge by Dana Zzyym, who was denied a passport for refusing to check "male" or "female" on the application. Zzyym was born with ambiguous sexual characteristics and raised as a boy but later came to identify as intersex and neither man nor woman.

Government lawyers argued that moving beyond two gender choices for passports would upend officials' ability to verify identities and backgrounds because of reliance on drivers' licenses and birth certificates issued by states offering only male and female gender options.

Jackson appeared exasperated at times, saying the State Department needs to catch up to a new era in which gender identification is not as clear as it was in the past.

"A lot of things are changing in our world," Jackson said.

It's unclear whether a settlement or a judge's order giving Zzyym's a gender neutral passport would have wider ramifications requiring the State Department to grant them to other Americans.

The State Department since 2010 has allowed transgender people to change their gender designation on passports from male to female or vice versa with a doctor's certification.

Australia, Nepal and New Zealand issue passports that do not designate gender and citizens of those nations are allowed to enter the United States.

But the State Department demands that they state whether they are male or female when they are required to apply for U.S. entry visas.

An Oregon judge last month allowed Jamie Shupe to be legally classified as a nonbinary person, neither male nor female. That decision is also believed to be the first of its kind for the country.

Oregon officials are working on a process to allow Shupe to get a driver's license with that designation, said Shupe's lawyer, Lake Parraguet.

WILLIAMS: Hired Oct. 2013

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and our partners at the county elections offices," Atkins wrote in an email to staff members.

Bayes will serve as interim elections director until the new secretary of state takes office in January. When a director is chosen, Bayes will return to her former position as deputy director.

Gov. Kate Brown, then the secretary of state, hired Williams in October 2013. Williams then had more than 20 years of experience in three states. He was executive secretary of the Cleveland County Election Board in Norman, Oklahoma, before joining

the Oregon Secretary of State's Office. Before that, he worked for the Denver Elections Division and Automated Elections Services, a New Mexico company that provides elections systems support.

As deputy director, Bayes oversaw state candidate filings, processing initiatives and referendums and campaign finance-related election law enforcement, and publication of the voters' pamphlet, among other duties. She has worked for the Elections Division since 1991.

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GRAIN: United Grain was formed in 1969

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and made a good first impression on producers.

"I think we've been received very well," he said. "They appreciate that we're here."

United Grain now has the task of picking up where PGG dropped off, while updating infrastructure that has become obsolete. When UGC agreed to buy the facilities, it promised to invest \$9 million toward making them more modern and efficient. Flagg said the contract gives them five years to get the job done, but added they want to move forward as soon as possible.

"Many of the elevators are so antiquated they're no longer competitive and, quite frankly, no longer safe," he said.

That level of commitment from United Grain comes at the backing of its owner, the Mitsui Group, a multi-billion dollar international trading company with offices in Tokyo and New York City. Mitsui became interested in food production after building its portfolio in mining, energy and manufacturing.

United Grain is at the forefront of that strategy, Flagg said. The company formed in 1969 and now operates the largest grain export terminal on the West Coast in Vancouver, Washington. For years, UGC operated purely as a wheat exporter, but with the rise of genetically modified crops, an emerging middle class in China and deepening of the Columbia River channel to accommodate larger ships, Flagg said the market has become significantly larger and more complex.

That, in turn, has led United Grain to branch out and work directly with farmers, which Flagg said gives them a greater command of the whole supply chain. In other words, they can supply more grain at a faster rate, amounting to more reliable service for customers.

"It's all about speed, space and service," Flagg said. "That's why we're here."

The PGG Board of Directors voted to dissolve in May, ending 86 years of service in Eastern Oregon. Flagg said everyone, including himself, regrets that the co-op failed. But UGC is excited for the chance to develop relationships directly with farmers. UGC did retain

nine former PGG employees, including Jason Middleton, who was hired as region manager.

Flagg knew even before the sale it would take time and money to get the elevators where they need to be. Some just simply aren't equipped to handle the needs of today's farmers and, when it comes to harvest, time equals money.

"I'm dealing with truck lineup issues at McNary, and it's only the front end of harvest," Flagg said. "If the trucks don't get back to the field, harvest stops ... We need to make these facilities faster, and hold more grain."

The first step, Flagg said, is to look at which elevators are worth updating and which UGC will have to close. Flagg, 66, said he will facilitate that process and, once the operation is running smoothly, he plans to retire.

Umatilla County is one of, if not the best, grain producing counties in the U.S., Flagg said. He said it's up to them now to improve their level of service and win PGG's customers back.

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BIKERS: Three Dog Night performs on Saturday

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South Dakota, Winnemucca, Nevada and New Hampshire, the Cunninghams were friends of Folkestad and had supported his previous rallies in Baker City.

Although they had only just started Day 1 of the five day event, the married couple said they already think they'll come back to Pendleton next year.

Tom liked that the rally was close to home and was going to feature Three Dog Night as its headliner.

"That's what bikers like — listening to music and drinking beer," he said with a grin.

Several other riders came from the large metro areas surrounding Seattle, Spokane and Portland and decided to come either through word of mouth or advertising.

"That's what bikers like — listening to music and drinking beer."

Tom Cunningham, of Baker City

With 6,000 attendees last year, Folkestad said Pendleton Bike Week was the largest motorcycle rally in the Northwest and will probably secure that spot this year.

Even with the growth, a couple bikers commented that it was comparatively small to Sturgis, one of the biggest rallies in the country.

Weighing Pendleton against Sturgis didn't stop dozens of bikers from rumbling down Court Avenue to Til Taylor Park for a law enforcement tribute.

While the tribute was also held last

year, the 2016 event was given more weight because of the recent murders of police officers in Dallas and Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

After noting that he had never worn the black band across his badge as much as he has this year, Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan encouraged the audience to bring love and joy to their communities to prevent violence.

Despite previous proposals to replace Til Taylor Park and its memorial to police officers killed in the line of duty, Mayor Phillip Houk said the park and memorial would never be removed or replaced.

Despite the somber tone, Houk urged the bikers to "Let'er Ride" during their week in Pendleton.

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LANGE: Had an illustrious 30-year career at BMCC

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She said he was a wonderful father, and it makes her sad to see her sons Adam, 25, and Jason, 22, lose their dad right as they were at an age where they were really starting to watch him and try to model their lives after his.

He really loved his family, she said, and wanted to look after them, which is why she believes he clung to life so tenaciously in his final days.

"He just fought so hard, I think for me," she said. "I finally had to talk to him and say, you know, if you go, I'll be OK."

Karen believes she will be reunited with Dan in the next life, a belief he shared. The family are members of the Free Methodist Church in Pendleton and Karen said their faith has provided peace and comfort during their trials.

Scott Little, the Langes' pastor, said the couple was already a "steady and faithful" presence at the Free Methodist Church when he arrived 17 years ago, and they frequently served on the church's leadership council and led worship services on Sundays.

He said Dan was a

"tremendously gifted saxophone player" who used his musical talents to bless the congregation, and that he always admired Dan's humility and sense of humor.

"I really appreciated his wisdom over the years," Little said.

He said Dan and Karen have always been examples of service, grace, and love of the Lord and those around them. He said through their trials over the last three years they kept a positive attitude.

"Even in the worst of this, it was hard to know just how difficult it was for Dan physically, because he just didn't complain," Little said. "There wasn't any sense that he was bitter or angry."

Cam Preus, president of BMCC, said Dan's 30-year career at the college was an illustrious one.

"He left a strong mark on the college," she said.

He started out as a music faculty member but as he moved up to his final position

as vice president of instruction he helped create better assessments and curriculum through his skill of analyzing data.

"He loved to put seemingly unrelated information into a database and mess around with formulas, and then realize when it was all put together that there were

connections and patterns," she said.

Preus said he was calm, patient, a good listener and a "friend to many at the college."

The family has not finalized a date and time yet for Dan's memorial service. The *East Oregonian* will publish it when details are confirmed.

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