

CITY HALL: Has been a year and a half since fire

Continued from 1A

ordinance required that the building be repaired within a year of the fire, but the city council granted the family an extension in October as long as they built a new roof and sealed the building by the end of the year.

With the roof incomplete by the deadline, the council voted to start enforcing the ordinance Wednesday despite the family's arguments against it.

Taking a break from trying to clear the debris with a loader, Marco Quezada said his family would have negotiated the extension further if they had known that the council wouldn't make allowances for cold-weather work stoppages.

"You can't predict the weather," he said. Quezada said the family still intends to complete the roof and is hoping for warmer weather next week to restart work on the project.

The family could have most of the roof complete within the next few weeks, he said, but the project still needs an extended period of dry weather for the small family crew to

finish it.

The daily fine amount, which can go as high as \$500, will be determined by the Pendleton municipal court judge.

Quezada said the fine will be a hindrance to their efforts and hopes the judge will throw it out.

Given that it's been a year and a half since the fire, city manager Robb Corbett said the council took the right approach.

"I don't see any other options besides what the council has already done," he said.

Corbett said city staff were aware of the importance of the building to the community and dedicated hours toward helping the family find financing and grants to help get the restoration off the ground, but the Quezadas were slow to react.

Only time will tell whether the impending fines will be an impediment or a catalyst for the project, Corbett said.

Pendleton developer Jamie Stone said the council's decision is not only an impediment to the Quezada's plans, but a permanent impediment to his own as well.

Stone is the owner of Stone Properties and

has assisted the Quezadas with the old city hall project.

After the council's decision, Stone said he nixed plans to build eight duplexes and a couple of high-end homes on Southwest Nye Avenue.

Stone said the mixed messages the council sent to the Quezadas meant it was too risky for him to work with Pendleton city officials. He said he would most likely develop in Hermiston instead.

Stone said that if the Quezadas were a part of the "good of boys," they would have been treated differently.

The future of the nuisance case is now in the hands of the municipal court.

At the meeting Tuesday, Nancy Kerns said it typically takes a few weeks from the time of the citation to schedule a court date for the nuisance fine.

If the judge assesses a fine and the Quezadas don't pay it, they could be held in contempt of court.

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DEPOT: CDA inheriting furniture and equipment

Continued from 1A

still on the table.

However, Smith, a state legislator whose district covers the former Depot land, said the Base Realignment and Closure office is working "extraordinarily hard" to complete a memorandum of agreement by Feb. 1. Based on his conversations with various offices involved in the transfer, he believes the Columbia Development Authority could be the legal owner of the land by mid-October or the first of November.

Division of water rights between the CDA and the Oregon National Guard had been a major sticking point in transfer of the land, but the board celebrated the news that a deal has finally been approved, giving the CDA rights to 73 percent of the water. Smith said reaching the deal would not have been possible without significant help from Rep. Greg Walden (R-Ore.) and his staff. He said the next task will be converting some of those rights from fire suppression to other purposes.

On Friday the board also discussed what to do with the assets — ranging from heavy machinery to office furniture — that the CDA will inherit along with the land.

Smith informed the board that he had finally gotten permission to move equipment indoors to preserve it from the weather. However, he said it would be at the CDA's expense and based on the estimates from a mechanic he brought in to examine the equipment, it would take about \$25,000 worth of new tires, batteries, fluids and fuel to get everything operational enough to drive to another portion of the depot.

Since the CDA does not have that kind of money to spend all at once, board member Kim Puzey suggested that a prioritized list be made based on the cost of getting a piece of equipment running and its importance in protecting.

Smith said the CDA was inheriting "hundreds" of pieces of office furniture, including bookshelves, desks, filing cabinets, water coolers and refrigerators, as well as a "phenomenal" fully-stocked machine shop. He suggested a small committee be put together to come up with a plan for handling all of those assets, which could possibly include giving items to local governments and nonprofits.

Morrow County planning director Carla McLane told Smith she remembered years before he was hired that formal agreements had been made with various local entities, including CAPECO, to transfer some items to them, and she said those agreements needed to be located so that the CDA could honor them.

Smith said he has been in talks with the city of Umatilla about handling the site's future wastewater needs and had been contacted by other entities, including the city of Hermiston, about the same topic. He planned to meet with those potential partners later Friday afternoon to work on a plan and to discuss getting an exception to the state's Goal 11 guidelines.

UMATILLA: Wants to start doing more events downtown

Continued from 1A

us right now, so we're pretty excited about that," he said.

To kick off the city's big push for downtown revitalization, Ribich and Pelleberg have sent out surveys to each property owner and business owner along Sixth Street and are now following up with face-to-face interviews. They said they want to hear from everyone on what their vision is and what the city can do to help accomplish it.

"We're trying to understand from the property owners, what are your challenges and what are your goals, and how can we help you?" Ribich said.

Pelleberg said that during those talks he and Ribich are also giving business owners information about city programs like the facade grants and state resources like Business Oregon and Oregon Main Street. Pelleberg said the meetings have been well received by people who didn't know about some of the free resources available and had felt neglected by the city in the past.

"No one's reached out to them," he said.

After collecting as much information as they can, Pelleberg said the city plans to hire a consultant who specializes in economic development to help use that information to form a plan for revitalizing the downtown area, particularly Sixth Street, do some marketing and business recruitment, and host meetings with local business owners.

"That's going to be the exciting part," Ribich said. "I can't wait to get to that part."

The city has been working to step up code enforcement, and to enforce the code more evenly, which have been concerns Ribich and Pelleberg have heard from people wishing their neighbor would clean up an eyesore affecting property values. It has also been hosting a major community clean-up event each spring that includes volunteers that will help clean out a property for those who are physically or financially limited



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

City leaders in Umatilla have kicked off a revitalization effort and have sent out surveys to businesses and property owners for input.

from doing the work themselves.

"It's looking a lot better here today than it did when I moved here two years ago," Ribich said.

The city also wants to start doing more events downtown after seeing the success of the outdoor family movie nights at the marina they started last year. Pelleberg said there is a group in town that plans to start a farmer's market in Umatilla this summer.

Pelleberg said some property owners he and Ribich have talked to said they are getting ready to put their vacant space back on the real estate market after taking it down for a while, and other business owners have shared new plans for niche businesses such as kayak rentals. He said the city gets a lot of commuters from Boardman to the Tri-Cities passing through and they hope that some of them can be encouraged to stop and shop in

"tax free Oregon" before heading home.

Before coming to work for the city of Umatilla, Pelleberg spent time working for the city of Pasco and the city of Kennewick.

He said when he first worked for Pasco, it was the part of the Tri-Cities people looked down on and only worked there as a stepping stone to a better-paying position in Richland or Kennewick. However, as Pasco began doing some of the same type of investments that Umatilla is starting (new parks, downtown revitalization programs, stronger code enforcement), Pelleberg said eventually people started leaving the other cities to work in Pasco, and Umatilla feels like it is going to be the same way.

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SALT: Tied to groundwater contamination

Continued from 1A

dependable at melting snow and ice, Strandberg said, but it is corrosive and potentially damaging to both vehicles and roadways. In particular, Strandberg cautioned that salt can leach into concrete down to the steel rebar of highways and bridges.

"We have to protect our infrastructure and investments that the citizens of Oregon have put in over the decades," he said.

Salt is also tied to increased contamination in groundwater, which Strandberg said is always a concern in the Columbia Basin watershed.

However, conversations are underway about where rock salt could be advantageous in the region. Five years ago, ODOT launched a pilot project using salt on Highway 95 in southeast Oregon, between the Idaho and Nevada borders.

Strandberg said the program has indeed resulted in a reduction in crashes.

"They've been able to fine-tune the process over the years," he said.

It is possible that rock salt could come to I-84 as early as next year, though Strandberg said there are no details in place.

"There's definitely some talk," he said. "It just depends on how we develop that program."

For updates on travel conditions through the weekend, visit www.trip-check.com.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

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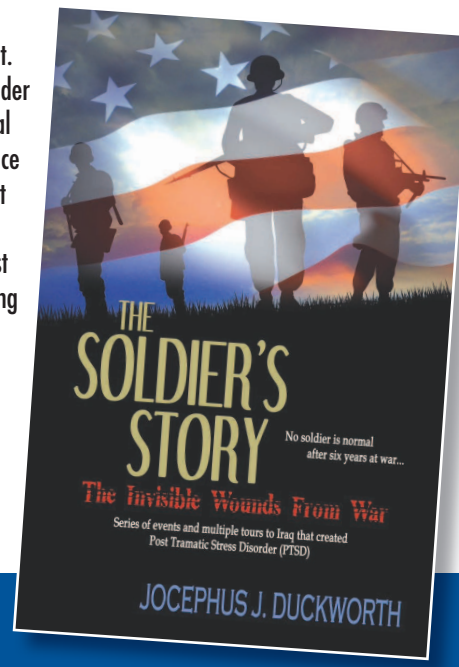


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