

GRAIN: Automated kiosks at the truck scales

Continued from 1A

who was hired by PGG as the director of grain operations in 2012, said they knew coming in there was work that needed to be done.

"There was just a lack of maintenance on a lot of those projects," said Middleton, who used to work as PGG's director of grain operations. "You can go back four decades, at least."

With that hectic first harvest behind them, Middleton said they are now ready to move forward on infrastructure. The bulk of the money will be spent at McNary, he said, where they recently automated kiosks at the trucking scales. Now, drivers simply swipe a card to bring up their information, and are directed to one of five pits where they can unload grain.

The way scales are set up will allow trucks to flow in one direction, Middleton said, instead of before when drivers had to weigh in and out at the same scale.

"It's going to save a lot of time, compared to last year,"

"It's difficult being a farmer now, with margins as tight as they are. We want to be their best option."

— Jason Middleton, region manager for United Grain

he said. "There's no reason trucks couldn't get in and out anywhere from five to eight minutes, entire process."

Automation has also come to the elevator control room at McNary, which will make it easier for the operators there to switch between bins and keep wheat segregated. The idea, Middleton said, is to maximize efficiency — the less time farmers spend at the elevator, the more time they have to work in the fields.

That's also the concept behind ground piles at Mission and Helix. As combines are able to cut wheat faster, Middleton said farmers are using larger trucks to deliver grain, which can be unloaded more quickly at piles as opposed to the old upcountry elevators.

Each pile will store 1.4 million bushels, Middleton said. The goal is to build a

third pile near Athena by next year as well, he added.

Finally, a ground pile and automated scales will be installed at the Alicel Terminal near La Grande. Both Alicel and McNary are used for storing and shipping grain, which is hauled by train at Alicel and by river barge at McNary.

"It should just be a lot more of an efficient process," he said.

As for the upcountry elevators, many of the old wooden buildings have already been closed for safety, Middleton said. Those include Helix, Rew, Mission, Stanton, Elgin, and Holdman.

But some of the metal and concrete elevators will be upgraded, where farmers will be able store crops on demand separate from traditional wheat. With wheat prices as low as they are,

Middleton said he expects farmers may be considering alternatives to help pay the bills.

Options are limited in dryland farming, but barley, canola and certain types of beans or peas may be options, depending on the market.

"If there are other options out there, I think guys will be looking at them," he said.

Some of the "on demand" crop elevators will include Fulton, Sparks, Pilot Rock, Juniper, Adams and Midway. Many of these facilities simply need some routine repairs and maintenance, Middleton said, but won't require a ton of capital.

By giving farmers more tools come harvest, Middleton said United Grain hopes to become a competitive choice for growers in the region.

"It's difficult being a farmer now, with margins as tight as they are," Middleton said. "We want to be their best option."

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PENDLETON: Upgraded track material will provide more durability, cushioning

Continued from 1A

seat repairs, the addition of air conditioning and a control booth, new sound and lighting systems and asbestos removal.

More complicated was how the district would approach the demolition of the old district office at 1207 S.W. Frazer Ave.

Although former superintendent Jon Peterson promised the neighbors in the area that the resulting empty lot would include a "green space," Fishel said that level of renovation might be too expensive. While just demolishing the building and turning it into a gravel lot would cost \$145,897, paving the lot and installing lights and grass would cost an additional \$756,300.

If the district went that route, it would be forced to apply crack seals and patches to the high school track rather than reconstructing and resurfacing it, another Peterson promise.

The thought of skimping on the track in favor of bolstering the district office demolition didn't gain traction, and the board turned their focus to the surfacing options and the track and field lighting.

For the surfacing, the district could purchase a basic material for \$241,781 or spend an additional \$50,000 for an upgraded track that was more durable and provided more cushioning. The district could also light the whole track and field for a total of \$319,450, or contractors could lop off \$200,000 in cost by installing the bases and power service while waiting on the light fixtures and poles.

Board member Steve Umbarger recommended

the district talk with the Buck Boosters about providing the extra \$200,000, but board chairwoman Debbie McBee said the boosters' offer wasn't close to covering the cost.

Ultimately, the district chose the option with the basic demolition and the upgraded track material, with the lights contingent upon what was left over after the other projects.

If the district pays for the lights and includes a 10 percent contingency, Fishel estimated that the total cost of the final stage of the bond would cost \$1,882,913, leaving the district with \$6,347.

The centerpieces of the district's \$55 million bond, which was passed in 2013, was the construction of new Washington and Sherwood Heights elementary schools, the transformation of Hawthorne Alternative High School into the Pendleton Early Learning Center, converting Lincoln Primary School and West Hills Intermediate School to the new district office and the Pendleton Tech & Trade Center, respectively, and other renovations across the district's facilities.

Although the bond was for \$55 million, Fishel said district actually garnered more than \$60.2 million through grants, interest and energy incentives. The district has spent \$58.4 million to date and has already used some of the cost savings to spend \$3.5 million on the Pendleton Tech and Trade Center instead of the budgeted \$727,729.

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BUDGET: Corporations contribute 6 percent of general fund revenue

Continued from 1A

entirely by cutting spending, 60 percent favored some combination of spending reductions and tax hikes and 4 percent preferred only tax increases. Another 8 percent didn't have an opinion on how to solve the problem.

Voters said businesses and corporations should contribute about 40 percent of Oregon's state tax revenue. Corporations now contribute only 6 percent of general fund revenue, according to the Legislative Revenue Office.

Voters overwhelmingly rejected the idea of a general sales tax, even if it went to education.

They are open to giving up their personal income tax

kicker refund if the proceeds were to support K-12 schools. The last personal kicker refund equaled about \$402 million in 2015, said LRO senior economist Chris Allanach.

Registered voters representing the state's demographic makeup, including geographic area, age, gender and political party, were interviewed by phone Feb. 23-26. The results have a 4 percent margin of error.

Highlights of the poll:

- Sixty percent of voters think the state should balance its budget through a combination of spending reductions and tax hikes.

Six-in-10 believe Oregon has a spending problem.

• Ninety-three percent of voters say it's important to

fund K-12 education.

- Sixty-five percent of voters would support a measure such as Ballot Measure 97 if the tax revenue were dedicated to K-12 schools. Measure 97 would have levied a 2.5 percent tax on the Oregon sales of certain corporations. Voters overwhelmingly defeated the measure, and the poll indicates that voters objected to the fact that the tax revenue was not dedicated to certain purposes.

- On average, voters think Oregon's businesses and corporations contribute about 36 percent of all state taxes collected. In fact, businesses contribute only 6 percent. A majority of voters say businesses and corporations should contribute 40 percent

on average.

- Fifty-six percent support a \$2 billion increase in funding every two years to education to meet the Quality Education Model.

- Fifty-nine percent are opposed to a general sales tax to fund K-12 education.

- Six-of-10 voters would be willing to give up the 2 percent kicker refunds if the proceeds were placed in a rainy-day fund specifically for K-12 education. (Corporation income kicker refunds were eliminated with Ballot Measure 85 in 2012, and the proceeds were dedicated to K-12).

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

MARIJUANA: ATM at the store ran out of cash

Continued from 1A

children and not to smoke in public.

Brandon Krenzler, one of the dispensary's co-owners, said the first day had been a "beautiful experience."

"We've had a lot of happy people," he said.

So many happy people, in fact, that the ATM at the business had run out of cash. For now, federal laws against marijuana have forced dispensaries to run on a cash-only basis.

Krenzler said the dispensary was offering people a "craft cannabis experience" that was more tasteful and refined than the flashy green-light dispensaries one might see in parts of Portland.

One of his customers interrupted to shake his hand and thank him for giving Pendleton its first opportunity to purchase legal marijuana. Some customers were experienced buyers, others needed help picking out a strain that would provide the experience they were looking for. The customers ranged from the group of men in their twenties who exchanged high fives and enthusiastically congratulated departing customers, to a woman who asked if the dispensary gave senior citizen discounts (they do).

Some slipped quietly out of the store, refusing to discuss their experience with the newspaper, while others felt comfortable enough to talk about what is now a legal purchase.

Seth Hiatt said he thought the store was "nice, clean and organized" and he would return.

"It's nice to have something local," he said.

Sandra Doherty said she didn't know much about marijuana, but the staff were knowledgeable and patient in answering her questions.

"I'm really surprised Pendleton allowed it, but I think the tax money will be awesome," she said.

She said she hoped the taxes on the sales going on inside would be used for improving schools and roads in Pendleton.

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THE COST IS FREE TO MEMBERS AND STUDENTS; FOR ALL OTHERS THE COST IS \$6.00 AT THE DOOR.



Craig Coleman grew up in a farming family. He has farmed for over 30 years in the Willamette Valley, and then later in Eastern Oregon (Hermiston) where he currently lives. A serial entrepreneur, Coleman enjoys starting new projects and watching them take flight into successful ventures. His latest, Ordinance Brewing which he manages, recently has grown from a small scale brewery, to one that has a 50 bbl. brewing system. Ordinance's beer can be found in Oregon and Washington and soon will be found in Montana, Alaska, Idaho and surrounding states. So what is next? Well, Ordinance Distilling and Ordinance Cider of course! When not on the farm, or at the brewery, Coleman can be found checking up on Neighbor Dudes, an affiliated taproom in Hermiston or going to sporting events with his family.



Jean-Luke Alexander has been the Head Brewer at Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub in Pendleton Oregon since 2015. Jean-Luke graduated from Oregon State University in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science in Food Science/ Fermentation Science, and he also holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration/Marketing. Before coming to Prodigal Son, Jean-Luke was a brewer at Bridgeport Brewing Company in Portland Oregon, a malt house operator at Great Western Malting in Vancouver Washington, and had early experience as a brewery intern at Bridgeport Brewing, Deschutes Brewery in Bend Oregon, and McMenamins in Corvallis Oregon.

Jean-Luke and his wife Alyssa moved to Pendleton in 2015, and they attempt to keep up with their two boys, Murray and Keaton.



Rodney Bullington is a native of the Pacific Northwest and grew up in agricultural towns in Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington. Over the past 21 years of his professional career Rodney has provided project management and leadership for ESPN.com, Walt Disney Internet Group, Microsoft Xbox Games Studios, and Pop Cap games. Rodney moved back home to Pendleton Oregon with his wife Kelli and son Truman. Rodney started his career with Pendleton Grain Growers, Inc. in 2012 where he was responsible for PGG's IT, Safety, and Facilities (Infrastructure) teams and for the past two years McKennon Seed Plant. In 2015 Rodney and his wife Kelli purchased the Comrie's Cadillac and Oldsmobile dealership building on the eastside of Pendleton with a vision for Oregon Grain Growers Brand Distillery and on November 19, 2016 that vision became a reality when it opened its doors. With a focus on agriculture and Eastern Oregon growers and produce they have partnered with Cliff and Judy Bracher to bring Pendleton and the surrounding areas quality craft distilled spirits.

For more information about the EO Forum, please contact: Karen Parker at 541-966-3177.

The EO Forum is a collaborative effort among leaders from Blue Mountain Community College, InterMountain Education Service District; the East Oregonian; American Association of University Women; and Harriet Isom; a former United States ambassador who also serves on the committee. This EO Forum program is offered as part of Blue Mountain Community College's annual Arts and Culture Festival. For more information on the festival go to www.bluecc.edu.