

Port gets statewide business benefit

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

As the Port of Morrow grows, it will recoup some of the money it has spent to ready its property for new business.

Business Oregon, the state’s economic development agency, recently named the Port’s East Beach Industrial Site as a “Regionally Significant Industrial Site.” The designation is given to entities that are developing sites for industrial use, and offers them tax reimbursement for money they spend on preparing a site.

To qualify for the program, the port had to designate a site and identify reasons the site was not yet “shovel-ready.” Those issues became the port’s development plan. They include providing fresh and potable water, natural gas, rail and sewer improvements.

Once the port has implemented its capital improvement plan and has tenants on the property, half the taxes tenants pay on their employees will be reimbursed to the port, who can then use that money to pay for up to 100 percent of the cost to ready



A shipping container is off-loaded from a railcar at one of the railroad spurs in May 2015 at the Port of Morrow.

that site. That cost does not include vertical construction, or any work on buildings — only on the lot.

“It could be anything from grade issues, dealing with access, providing utilities,” said Daniel Holbrook, an industrial lands specialist for Business Oregon. “Once the issues are addressed, that site will be regionally significant for industry.”

Port Director Ryan Neal said the port had to identify

a site that met some requirements before they could apply for the program. The site had to be vacant, slated for industrial use, and had to provide a minimum of 25 jobs. The East Beach Industrial Site, which the port has identified for development, is about 982 acres, and could provide about 800 jobs, Neal said. He said the site improvements have to be completed by 2023. According to the program,

rural sites must also pay employees wages higher than the county or state average, whichever is lower.

The Port of Morrow was the second site in the state to receive the RSIS designation, after the Port of Portland’s Troutdale-Reynolds Industrial Park. The Port of Morrow is the first to qualify for the program since Business Oregon changed the application process last year.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Oregon vineyards face losses amid concerns about taint from smoke

By ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

SALEM — Some Oregon lawmakers and winery owners scrambled Thursday to help a dozen vineyard owners who face the prospect of tons of grapes withering on the vine after a California company abruptly canceled contracts to buy the grapes worth millions of dollars over fears they are tainted by wildfire smoke.

Copper Cane, based in the Napa Valley, canceled contracts to buy 2,000 tons of grapes just as the annual harvest was getting underway in Oregon.

The value of the grapes totals \$4 million. If they go unsold, harvesting crews will be out of work, and earnings and profits won’t be pumped into the local economy.

The cancellation of the contracts “is perhaps the most devastating issue facing the Oregon wine industry in our history,” said Christine Collier Clair, winery director of Willamette Valley Vineyards.

Lab tests carried out so far show wildfire smoke hasn’t had an adverse effect on the grapes, Clair said. The vineyard in northwest Oregon is buying some of the crop for its brand that’s made from grapes grown in southern Oregon’s Rogue Valley wine country, paying the full market price.

Jim Blumling, Copper Cane’s vice president of operations, said both lab and sensory tests showed a high level of smoke taint. The most effective time to test is as close as possible to harvest, he added.

He said the California company is seeking grapes



AP file photo/Don Ryan

In this Feb. 23, 2004, file photo, winemaker David Lett savors the bouquet from a glass of pinot noir at his Eyrie Vineyards home in Dundee. Some Oregon lawmakers and winery owners are scrambling to help a dozen vineyards owners who face having 2,000 tons of grapes wither on the vine, unsold, after a California winemaker abruptly canceled contracts to buy them, claiming they were tainted from the summer’s wildfires.

from elsewhere in Oregon, praising its “reputation for quality and excellence.”

“We would not recklessly damage our reputation, erode the image of our brands or that of Oregon’s wine growers and vintners by producing a product that does not meet those high standards,” Blumling said.

Wildfires cloaked the U.S. West in smoke this summer. It comes as climate change extends the wildfire season and makes blazes bigger and more destructive, worsening

air quality and posing problems for businesses.

Ed King, founder of King Estate Winery in Eugene in west-central Oregon, also is buying grapes from the southern Oregon growers and wants other wineries or custom crush facilities with extra capacity to take them in to sell on the bulk wine market.

King Estate, Willamette Valley Vineyards and Silvan Ridge Winery of Eugene are going to jointly make a “Solidarity Vintage” with the

grapes, Clair said.

“The goal is to save these growers from catastrophe,” Clair said.

Rep. David Gomberg was among several dozen people who went to the vineyards in southern Oregon to harvest pinot noir grapes Thursday and draw attention to the crisis.

Gomberg, accompanied by state Rep. Gary Leif and Sen. Alan DeBoer, was impressed that Oregon wineries are stepping up to help.

“They’re saying, ‘We’re all in this together. We’re going to help each other out,’” Gomberg said.

Southern Oregon’s economy already had taken a hit from wildfire smoke, which cost the famed Oregon Shakespeare Festival \$2 million in revenue. It forced the festival in Ashland to cancel 26 outdoor performances.

Not included in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s calculations is how much revenue was lost from would-be tourists who normally come from around the world but stayed away because of the smoke this year.

HERMISTON

Mobile vending licenses still available

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Mobile vending licenses have increased in Hermiston, but so far no one has snatched them up.

In August, the Hermiston City Council voted to increase the number of available licenses from three to six after hearing complaints that there were people who wanted to open food trucks in town but could not because all three licenses were currently in use. The amended ordinance came into effect last week, 30 days after passage.

City planner Clint Spencer said he has talked to people interested in opening a food truck in town, but as of Thursday afternoon all three new licenses are still up for grabs.

“We’ve received a lot of inquiries and have been working to help people

find sites that comply with the spacing requirements but no one has submitted an actual application,” he said in an email.

The new ordinance opens up other business opportunities beyond the long-term licenses. Temporary 90-day licenses are available for uses, such as a summer ice cream stand. The city has also expressed intent to create a food pod on public property, possibly the parking lot on Orchard Street across from the Hermiston Post Office. Trucks involved in the food pod would not be required to hold one of the six long-term licenses.

Spencer said the city is working on the food pod idea, but it would not start until spring, when the weather would be better.

For more information about mobile vending rules and licenses, contact city hall at 541-567-5521.

BRIEFLY

Oregon gets Real ID extension

Oregon has received its extension for the Real ID Act.

The act, passed in 2005, requires state driver’s licenses to meet certain requirements to be used for identification to get on a commercial flight or enter a secure federal installation. Oregon’s licenses do not currently meet those requirements, but the Department of Homeland Security has been granting yearly extensions.

Oregon’s extension was set to run out Oct. 10, but DHS granted another year-long extension this week. The state plans to begin offering Real ID-compliant cards as an option to drivers in July 2020 for an additional fee. After that time, regular driver’s licenses will no longer

be able to be used for air travel.

Boardman announces council candidates

Three of Boardman’s six city council positions are up for election this November. The city of Boardman said seven candidates have filed for the election, and instead of running for specific positions, those with the three highest vote counts will get the available seats.

Two incumbents, Brandon Hammond and Brenda Proffitt, will seek re-election. The five other candidates are Jonathan Cornelius, Roy Drago Jr., Logan Mayfield, Marc Rogelstad and Michelle Seeley. Current councilor Del Turner’s position is up for election, but he will not seek another term.

SUBMIT COMMUNITY NEWS

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

AIR QUALITY

Air quality and burn day information: www.pendleton.or.us/public-works/environmental. Air Quality Index: www.deq.state.or.us/aqi. Burn Line: 541-966-0327.

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