

Project: First of its size in North America

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equivalent of 340,000 homes. The solar farm will be one of the largest in Oregon, while the battery storage facility will not only be the largest in the state, but one of the largest in the United States.

GE Renewable Energy Inc. is producing the 120 wind turbines, which will go up just north of Lexington. The project has not determined the specific equipment for the solar farm and battery storage facility. Corson said the wind farm will come online by the end of 2020, then work begins in 2021 on the solar array and the battery storage. Once complete, he said, PGE expects half of the power it produces will be emissions free.

“This is an important milestone for us, and we’re pleased to be moving in that direction,” Corson said, because it will dramatically reduce the company’s greenhouse gas emissions while helping meet Oregon’s climate change goals and transition to a clean energy future for customers.

The timing is critical for PGE. The company is shutting down its 450-megawatt coal-fired plant outside Boardman at the end of 2020. Corson said Wheatridge Renewable is not a one-to-one replacement for the coal plant, which has served as a power generating workhorse, able to run 24-7. But

the wind farm will help fill the gap, he said, and PGE last year signed deals to buy hydropower. That’s the kind of reliable energy “we can call on when we need it,” he said.

The solar farm will charge the large batteries, which can provide 30 megawatts of continuous power for 4 hours. Eventually, Corson said, the wind farm also will contribute to the battery storage. He explained wind sometimes will be the primary energy producer at the site and solar will come to the fore other times, “and the batteries help even out the flow.”

PGE also is keeping an eye on the Oregon Legislature’s move to produce a carbon cap-and-trade bill. Corson said Wheatridge Renewable is not a response to that possible law.

“We’re down in Salem and we’re optimistic this could be the year a well-developed cap-and-trade program comes through,” he said. Oregon law even requires the company to pull out of its share of the coal-fired power plant in Colstrip, Montana, by 2035.

Morrow County Commissioner Don Russell praised the project, and the significance it will have for Eastern Oregon residents.

“A lot of those employees live in Morrow County — others live in Umatilla and Gilliam,” he said. “They’re good contributors to the

county. They’ll retrain people who worked at the coal-fired plant to work at the wind and solar facilities — it’ll retain those jobs.”

Russell also said the project will give local farmers and ranchers the opportunity to have another revenue stream.

“A lot of landowners in Morrow County, primarily dryland wheat farmers, will have wind towers on their property,” he said. “They’ll get another source of income, and not have to rely completely on Mother Nature.”

Russell said the negotiations for where wind towers will be located, and how much farmers will be reimbursed, are all between individual landowners and NextEra.

Russell said the county is working to finalize a Strategic Investment Program (SIP) agreement with the companies, meaning that in lieu of property taxes, the companies will pay some portion of their income to local entities, such as the county and taxing districts. He said they expect to have the agreement within the next month.

State law dictates that the first \$25 million of the project goes on the tax rolls, Russell said, and the next \$500,000 goes toward a “community service fee” — distributed between all the taxing districts in the code area, by the percentage they would get from their tax rate.

Dave’s: Landmark in Pendleton

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it remains. Dave retired in 2011, and Toni took on managing the business. Dave Walters died suddenly in December 2016 while vacationing in Mesa, Arizona, where he spent winters. Toni Walters died in July 2018.

Jerrold “JJ” Spriet of Trustime/LaSalle St. Securities is the executor of the Walters’ estate. Spriet in a written statement explained one of the reasons McAnally was interested in Dave’s was its location between his two other establishments and their close proximity.

McAnally was negotiating with Toni Walters to buy Dave’s when she became ill, according to Spriet, but they did not reach a deal. McAnally is a “great operator” of Pendleton businesses, Spriet stated, “and he understands what Dave’s has meant to this community over the years as a friendly, convenient spot that is known for top-notch service.”

McAnally in the announcement said his vision for Dave’s is similar to when he purchased Big John’s Pizza.

“Big John’s was a well-known hometown brand when I purchased the business and the same is true with Dave’s,” he stated. “I want to continue building the brand that Dave and Toni cre-

ated, and get Dave’s back to the customer service standards they demanded daily.”

McAnally also reported he plans to introduce self-serve frozen yogurt and new deli items at Dave’s, offer Big John’s pizza by the slice and update the coffee bar. He said the goal is to give customers a reason to visit more often. He also promised to keep up the Walters’ tradition of customer service.

“The Walters went out of their way to provide an extra measure of service at the pumps,” according to McAnally, “and that’s what customers came to expect.”

McAnally with Doug Corey created the Pendleton Whisky Music Fest on the Round-Up Grounds, across the Court Avenue from Dave’s.

The pair in 2018 won the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce President’s Award at the First Citizen’s banquet, and this year the event won the chamber’s Tourism Award.

Spriet stated the exact terms and conditions of the sale were not available. McAnally owns the property at the pizza restaurant and the sports bar, according to Umatilla County property records. There is no official word on if he also bought the property with Dave’s. McAnally is set to take over the business in March.

Love: They suffered together through difficulties

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but also unconditional love and determination.

A difficult start

Franca moved to the United States from Italy at age 10. She experienced abuse as a child and endured three failed marriages. Over the years, she worked as payroll clerk, credit analyst, bill collector, retail clerk, bridal veil designer and bar owner.

Mike grew up in a troubled home and ended up on the streets as a 10-year-old. He flirted with drugs and crime. He had stints in juvie and lived in multiple foster homes.

The two connected in 2006, forming a fast friendship that deepened to best friends and then to love. Both realized they’d never really known true love in their dysfunctional families and the relationships that followed. This was something altogether different and wonderful.

“I never knew what love looked like,” Franca said. “Mike gave me the experience of being deeply understood, truly supported and completely and unconditionally loved.”

Life’s circumstances would soon test their relationship. In 2008, a 17-year-old driver took a shortcut through a parking lot and crashed into Mike and Franca’s car as the couple waited to pull out onto a Portland street.

“My head hit the windshield and ricocheted back and forth,” she said. “The fireman that pulled me out said I should have been dead.”

A helicopter rushed the unconscious Franca to the Oregon Health and Science University Hospital.

Months of therapy followed. Franca had seizures, sometimes 10 a day. She relearned how to walk and talk. Mike ferried her to and from therapy sessions. Sometimes he took her with him to his job with a company that refurbished motorhomes.

Her brain injury meant she sometimes reverted to toddlerhood. Franca tells a story of going to the grocery store with Mike and demanding candy. When he said no, she had a full-fledged tantrum, screaming and kicking her feet on the floor. He calmed her down, checked out and loaded her into the car.

Later, when Franca decided to complete her doctorate in divinity, Mike served as her study partner as she studied theology and struggled with her uncooperative memory.

They married in 2009.



Franca Krajeski keeps a locket containing some ashes of her husband, Michael, engraved with the words “I used to be his angel, now he is mine” around her neck.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Behind bars

Things went reasonably well until Mike fell back into drugs.

One afternoon in 2012, police officers banged on the front door of their Redmond home. The officers hauled her husband away. Mike was charged with robbery and burglary. When Franca visited him in the county jail before he was transported to EOCl, he urged her to forget him.

“He looked at me and said, ‘Ninety months is a long time. You need to move on and meet somebody. You’re still young,’” Franca recalls him saying.

She didn’t think about it long.

“I decided I’m going to stick this one out,” she said. “Mike was the only person who had given me unconditional love.”

She moved to Pendleton, got a small apartment and started a cleaning business. She saw Mike during visiting hours. They exchanged letters. They spent hours across from each other in the visiting room, playing cards and dominoes and talking. Spending that much time, she said, “you get to know the other person’s soul.”

Mike was set to be released in August of 2019. They would walk out EOCl’s front door together, he often told Franca.

In the meantime, they continued to commune daily. They prefaced their visits with prayer. Mike had taken to reading the Bible so they studied it. Franca’s pastor, Marc Mullins of First Christian Church, visited him regularly.

Mullins said Mike looked forward to getting out of prison and reuniting with Franca.

“He felt great responsibility for his wife’s well-being,” Mullins said. “He longed to get out and support her as she had supported him so

long in prison.”

Franca’s friend Margaret Rettig sometimes came along on visits and the couple taught her to play Crazy Eights. She marveled at their resilience.

“I never saw any blame,” Rettig said. “Both of them were wounded in their early lives. In each other, they found healing.”

An assault

On Feb. 10, 2014, according to legal documents prepared by Mike’s attorney, one of Mike’s cellmates assaulted him. According to the documents, the inmate “beat Krajeski so savagely that Krajeski was found in a pool of blood, a long laceration over his right eye, his nose was broken and crushed. The witnesses observed that the right side of his face was ‘caved in.’”

Franca’s copy of Oregon Department of Correction notes from that day confirm the description. Surgeons repaired multiple facial fractures. Symptoms included memory loss, vision problems and confusion and he had trouble speaking and walking. Soon after, Mike was diagnosed with hepatitis C virus and cirrhosis.

Mike won a lawsuit settlement in June of 2017 against two state physicians and the Oregon Department of Corrections department’s then-chief medical officer for delaying medical care for his hepatitis infection. The state agreed to pay \$100,000 and allow him medical treatment needed as long as incarcerated, including a liver transplant if approved by the OHSU transplant team.

A transplant never came. Mike’s condition worsened over the following months and he soon faced the grim realization that he was dying. He eventually entered the prison’s hospice

and Franca visited every day.

On the Friday before he died, “he looked horrible. He was in pain. He couldn’t play cards, so we held hands and prayed.”

On Saturday, Nov. 10, Franca got a call from Mike’s doctor that her husband had taken a turn for the worse and was back in the infirmary.

“He wants to see you,” he said.

Once there, she tried to give him comfort.

“I put my arm around him and told him, ‘I love you,’” she remembers. “He closed his eyes, squeezed my hand and he was gone.”

She was determined to walk out of the prison with Mike, just as he’d said they would.

“EOCl let me stay for three hours while the coroner and investigator came,” she said. “We walked out of there together.”

Mike’s body, however, lay on a gurney in a body bag.

On Dec. 8, Pastor Mullins conducted a memorial service at First Christian Church for Mike. Franca expected only she and a few friends and family would attend. Instead, dozens showed up. Most hadn’t known Mike.

At the service, Franca let her tears flow as she spoke.

“I have no words to describe how much I will miss the love of my life, my best friend who was my husband,” she said. “There can never be, for me, an explanation as to why I had to lose the love of my life when we still have so much life to live.”

She paused. “He always told me that I was his angel. And now he is mine.”

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Broadband: Usage fee would pay to expand internet coverage

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About 15 years ago, businesses, schools and local government in Tillamook County were clamoring for faster internet, according to David Yamamoto, a Tillamook County commissioner, who testified at a legislative hearing this week.

They didn’t want to wait for a commercial company to decide the county of about 26,000 people was a viable market.

Locals created Tillamook Lightwave, a partnership between the Port of Tillamook Bay, Tillamook County and the Tillamook People’s Utility District, to provide affordable broadband service.

“We have more cows than we do people in the county,” Yamamoto said. “Cows, fortunately, don’t use the internet, but our schools, and hospitals and businesses absolutely do.”

While businesses and government agencies have access now, many homes in the county still don’t have high-speed internet, said Yamamoto. He also serves on the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council.

Under House Bill 2184, legislation championed by state Rep. Pam Marsh, D-Ashland, a partnership like Tillamook Lightwave could apply to the state for money raised by the cellphone surcharge.

The proposal is one effort by state officials to bridge the so-called “digital divide” between rural and urban communities.

Gov. Kate Brown set aside \$1.1 million in her recommended budget to pay for a new Broadband Office at Business Oregon, the state’s economic development department.

Marsh has also introduced legislation codifying that office in law and defining its responsibilities. A new state office could also make federal money more available to support the internet projects.

“Despite the fact that broadband availability is really central to the economic development of our small communities, at this point, no one in the state of Oregon is in charge,” Marsh said.

Last week, the Oregon Senate passed a bill to bump up discounts on broadband service for low-income people.

The surcharge proposal, HB 2184, says areas with no or minimal service should be prioritized.

The Taxpayers Association of Oregon and the Oregon Small Business Association oppose the proposal.

“We shouldn’t be taxing one service, cellphones, for another service, internet,” said Tootie Smith of the Taxpayers Association of Oregon.

John Cmelak, a tax policy director for Verizon Wireless, said money to support broadband should come from the state’s general fund, not cellphone customers.

“You shouldn’t have wireless customers paying for something they don’t benefit at all from,” Cmelak told lawmakers. He contended the surcharge was regressive, and said many poor people rely on voice calls and don’t have landlines.

But if Monday’s hearing was any indication, there is some confusion among legislators about what the bill would do, and how it would affect the cost of cellphone service and video call services like Skype.

State Rep. Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, voiced frustration about what he felt was conflicting information presented by advocates and opponents of the bill on Monday.

“I don’t know what I can trust here in the testimony I’m hearing today,” Witt said. “I’m trying to make a decision here based on what I’m hearing, and I’m hearing very conflicting information.”

Marsh told her colleagues that the telecom industry is pushing for expansion of faster cellular service, known as 5G, mostly in urban areas.

“If we continue down the path toward bigger and faster technology without bringing rural Oregon along with us, we are going to exacerbate those rural Oregon technology divides,” Marsh said. “We are going to clearly identify the haves from the have-nots.”

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