

Locals challenge Umatilla County commissioners on gun rights

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners denied a request from local gun rights activists to refer a Second Amendment Sanctuary Ordinance to voters. Business partners Jesse Bonifer and John McBean, both of Athena, brought the informal request to the county. Bonifer said he's ready to submit a revision and try again. The board held a public hearing on the matter during its Wednesday morning meeting in Pendleton. County counsel Doug Olsen explained the proposal failed to meet state

constitutional requirements for the ballot, which is the problem the same proposal had in Columbia County. The submission did not meet the single subject requirement Oregon law requires for ballot measures, it dealt with administrative matters rather than legislative, and, primarily, Olsen said, it did not include all the provisions in state and federal law the ordinance would affect. Sheriff Terry Rowan told the board he is a strong supporter of the Second Amendment and at least 16 of Oregon's 36 counties, including Umatilla County, have an ordinance protecting the Second Amendment,

although some of those could face legal challenges. But Rowan could not support the proposal for a Second Amendment sanctuary. The document lacked language about prohibiting felons or people suffering from a mental disease or defect from having guns, Rowan said, and it should refer to language in state law regarding guns. The board opened the floor to hear from the public. Bonifer was first up. He said he understood the proposal does not meet the state's constitutional requirements and asked each commissioner if they would support it if the ordinance did meet the legal standard.

Each of the three commissioners said he would need to see the document before deciding. Commissioner John Shafer specified the board could not commit to an ordinance without seeing it and having county counsel Doug Olsen vet it. McBean stepped up second and said he was "surprised and disappointed" the board asked county counsel Doug Olsen to review the proposal without looping in Bonifer first. McBean then went off on a tangent about Senate Bill 978, an omnibus proposal in the state Legislature that would require safe gun storage, make gun owners liable if someone used their gun in a crime

and gather information from hospitals about firearm injuries, among other actions. McBean pressed the commissioners for their stance on the Senate bill, and that detour continued for the next two speakers. Commissioner George Murdock said he told local lawmakers about his opposition to the bill, which is in stalled in the Senate rules committee. He added if the Second Amendment Sanctuary Ordinance "finds its way forward with modifications," then the "broad array of the citizens of the county" should have their say. But he cautioned against an adversarial relationship and suggested the board and

the ordinance supporters work together because they were "on the verge of going in opposite directions." An agitated McBean asked to speak again. He strode to the mic and challenged whether the board reviewed the proposal while ignoring Bonifer. Shafer interrupted him and said this is the very adversarial attitude Murdock warned about. The board voted to deny putting the ordinance on the ballot and ended the hearing. Shafer later confirmed he told Bonifer on Monday the board could not support the ordinance but Bonifer wanted to plead his case anyway.

Veterans memorial project gets \$37,364 grant from state parks

East Oregonian

As supporters of a Pendleton veterans memorial begin to assemble a fundraising campaign, they got some early seed money for their effort. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department announced Wednesday that it was awarding \$37,364 to Pendleton to install a veterans memorial at an old fountain site near the intersection of Highway 11 and Southeast Court Avenue. Charles Denight, the chairman of the Pendleton Arts Committee, said the grant was a "good jump start" for funding the cen-

terpiece art structure at the memorial, which has an estimated cost of \$123,753. Denight said the memorial's backers, which include the city and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 922, will apply for grants from the Pendleton Foundation Trust and the Wildhorse Foundation to further bolster fundraising. But organizers are also planning a more public fundraising campaign to help the memorial reach its funding goal. Denight said one idea that's being considered is a donor brick campaign where donors would have their names engraved on

bricks that surround the memorial. Denight gave credit for the work done by VFW members, who have obtained the basalt columns that will be used to surround the art piece. The columns will each feature a bronze medallion representing a different branch of the military and were purchased by the city last year. The arts committee is starting to the selection process for an artist and expects to hire one in March 2020. The committee is projecting that the memorial will be completed and dedicated in January 2021.

Oregon House approves tax on business, with proceeds going to fund schools

By SARAH ZIMMERMAN
Associated Press

SALEM — Oregon lawmakers in the House on Wednesday approved an extra \$2 billion investment for the state's struggling school system, which suffers from some of the highest class sizes and lowest graduation rates in the nation. After more than five hours of floor debate, the chamber voted 37-21 on the package, which would raise \$1 billion per year through a half a percent tax on some of the state's wealthiest businesses. The money would be used to fund school initiatives focused on boosting test scores, increasing class time and expanding mental and behavioral health services. It's shaping up to be a major win for Democrats who were able to use their supermajority to wrangle a three-fifths vote for one of their major priorities this session. The tax package now goes to the Senate. But even if it is approved through the legislative process, it's possible that opponents will move to put the issue to the ballot. "We have endured two generations of children that have experienced education far below than what they deserve," said Rep. Nancy Nathanson, a Democrat from Eugene who is one of the co-sponsors of the measure. "We can't delay anymore." Republicans took issue with the modified commercial activities tax lawmakers are proposing to fund the program. The package calls for a 0.057% tax on gross receipts for businesses with \$1 million or more in sales, which make up less than 10% of all businesses in the

state. Opponents said the tax will cause price hikes on consumer goods and doesn't exempt enough agricultural operations. They also said lawmakers first need to address Oregon's unfunded public pension liability before putting money into the education system. "Businesses are going to close," said Rep. Kim Wallen, a Republican from Medford. "Pitting businesses against schools just isn't the way we do things in Oregon." The vote came exactly one week before thousands of teachers across the state will protest during a day of action to bring attention to the condition of Oregon's public schools, which educators said has reached a breaking point. The Oregon Education Association, the state's largest teacher's union, said schools have been underfunded for the past 30 years, causing class sizes to swell. The state has some of the largest class sizes in the country, as well as the nation's shortest school year and lowest graduation rate. John Larson, the Oregon Education Association's executive director, said the funding problem has gotten so bad that many schools have been forced to cut P.E. and other extracurriculars. Other schools, he said, no longer have full-time librarians, counselors or nurses. He notes one rural school in Eastern Oregon where students only have access to the library 30 minutes a day and use band equipment that's over 30 years old out of a lack of funding. "Educators have done a really great job in keeping up the facade that schools are able to do more with less without impacting the quality of education," said

Larson. "We are to a point now that we can't do that anymore." Lawmakers toured the state since last January, meeting with teachers and students to craft a funding package that addresses some of the biggest issues facing the education system while also allowing districts the flexibility to tie spending to the needs of individual public schools. Half of the expected revenue will go to statewide educational initiatives and early learning programs, including more funding for preschools and special education. The rest of the money — approximately \$1 billion every two years — will go directly to school districts, who must submit plans to the legislature on how they will use the funds to boost educational performance, support diversity and expand mental and behavioral health programs. Schools with high poverty levels will receive more money, and all districts will have to prove that student outcomes are actually improving. "We are finally going to do the things we need to do to get our school system back on track," said Rep. Rob Nosse, a Democrat from Portland. "We are going to create a new, stable source of funding so that the next generation will have the tools they need to succeed."



Staff photo by Jade McDowell
Java Junkies is opening in Stanfield at the former Lucky Jam Barn building. The owner says it may open next month.

Java Junkies announces plans to open a coffee shop in Stanfield

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

A popular Umatilla coffee shop is adding a Stanfield location. Java Junkies plans to open sometime in early June at 270 S. Main St. in Stanfield. The building formerly housed the Lucky Jam Barn. Vickie Borden, who owns Java Junkies with her daughter Donna Griggs, said Stanfield residents have been very supportive

of the news so far. "We're totally excited," she said. "The outpouring we're getting from the community has been amazing." Their announcement on Facebook was greeted by more than 230 likes and comments from people who promised to become regulars. The new location will feature a drive-through and sit-down service. The menu will include the same drinks, breakfast burritos, sandwiches and other items as the Umatilla loca-

tion. Java Junkies also has a drive-through-only coffee location in Irrigon. Borden said the Stanfield shop will likely have the same hours as the Umatilla location. Those are Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. She said they are still hiring for the Stanfield location and have openings in Umatilla. To apply visit Java Junkies at 1510 Sixth Street in Umatilla.

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