

EAST OREGONIAN

THURSDAY, JULY 25, 2019

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UP FOR GRABS

Pendleton business to go to auction, ending years of legal disputes between owners

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Hamley's western store, cafe and steakhouse could have new owners Thursday.

Hamley's owners Parley Pearce of Walla Walla and Blair Woodfield of Lake Oswego reached a deal after years of legal disputes to sell the iconic Pendleton businesses to the highest bidder. Woodfield waived the initial bid of \$2.5 million from HIPO, a limited-liability company of Payette, Idaho, that owns much of the Hamley debt, according to court records, and instead opted to go to auction under terms he and Pearce agreed to.

U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Trish Brown in Portland signed the order Monday allowing the auction to take place Thursday at 1 p.m. at the law offices of Black Helderline, Portland, for no more than four hours.

Woodfield said getting to this point has been long in coming and the auction could deliver benefits all around.

"I'm hoping whoever gets it will be a good owner, and I think there are buyers who will be good for Hamley's, and good for the employees and good for Pendleton and good for the whole area," he said.

Beyond that, Woodfield said, he will be there and see what happens.

Pearce, too, said he will be in the room and fighting to keep Hamley's with the help of a friend and backer who could be worth \$50 million-\$100 million.

"We intend to bid as long and as far as we can go," he said.

Others with deep pockets also seek to own the Hamley companies, including the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Chuck Sams, speaker for the tribes, said the CTUIR first expressed interest in Hamley's in 2012, but the owners wanted too much money. Woodfield in 2016 approached the tribes for buying the businesses, and the tribes were ready to offer \$3.1 million, according to court documents.

The tribes and its members have had relationships with the Hamley family and business dating back to the company's inception in 1905, Sams said, and tribal members crafted saddles for Hamley's. From his understanding, he said, the tribes will be one of five companies bidding to own Hamley's.

Pearce also said local interests might not prevail. Hamley's caught the attention of a Seattle bidder, he said, who has assets in the hundreds of millions and perhaps billions.

"If the tribes are going to be successful," Pearce said, "they better put their big boy pants on and bring their wallet."



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
The Hamley's steakhouse, western store and cafe will be auctioned to the highest bidder on Thursday in Portland.

But the money, Pearce stated, is not his main concern.

"My only genuine hope here is who ever ends up winning cares about Hamley's and Pendleton," he said. "That's all I really care about."

This is the second time in 13 months the Hamley's establishments were going to auction.

Woodfield in 2016 sued Pearce to break off from the businesses and to oust Pearce from controlling them. HIPO came in months later and bought \$1.2 million in Hamley debt, and in June 2018 planned to auction off stocks

of the company to recoup the funds. Woodfield at the time considered the auction a setup to allow Pearce and his cohorts to have Hamley's, so he declared bankruptcy to block that auction. The bankruptcy also put a hold on the lawsuit.

Thursday's financial action could mean Pearce and Woodfield, former longtime business partners, split for good, Woodfield gets the payout he wants and the court fights conclude. The outcome for Hamley's and its many employees will be up to whoever comes out on top.

PENDLETON

Councilor starts talks on homeless shelter

Pendleton City Council mulls changes to the way it deals with homelessness

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton City Council spent time at a Tuesday workshop agreeing that homelessness is an issue, but what to do about it remained an open question.

Councilor Carole Innes, a member of a committee on homelessness, said she's met with nonprofits that serve Pendleton's homeless population. Additionally, she's begun volunteering with Neighbor 2 Neighbor, Pendleton's weekly day center program.

See Shelter, Page A7

BAKER CITY

Hedman remains in Baker County Jail

By JAYSON JACOBY
EO Media Group

BAKER CITY — The Oregon man who was arrested in Baker City on July 8 and is accused of murdering a man in Walla Walla, Washington, remains in the Baker County Jail but he is likely to be extradited soon to Washington.



Hedman

Colby James Hedman, 23, is being held on \$1.1 million bail — \$1 million on the Washington murder charges and \$100,000 for a variety of charges in Baker County, District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff said.

Both are full bail, Shirtcliff said, meaning Hedman, who police said is a transient whose last known address was in Heppner, would have to post the full amount to be released.

Shirtcliff said the Walla Walla County District Attorney's Office has started the process to extradite

See Jail, Page A7

Committee maintains county needs a manager

Umatilla County Charter Review Committee believes county should appoint county manager

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Charter Review Committee continued to advocate for a manager to oversee county government. Review committee chair Michele Grable said that move is about recognizing the needs of the future.

Grable addressed the committee's final report with the county board of commissioners during its public meeting Wednesday at the county courthouse in Pendleton.

She said the committee eliminated its recommendation to change the board from three full-time commissioners to five part-timers "strictly based upon the input" from commissioners Bill Elfering and John Shaffer during a May 29 work session.

"We decided that upon your recommendation that moving to a five-member board of commissioners would not be advisable," she said. "That it would be a very hard sell to the public. Change is difficult. And it would not be in the best interest of the county to pursue an election that was not likely to succeed."

She also said she could see how the board could consider the change threatening because it took away power and reduced salaries. Still,



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Michele Grable, chair of the Umatilla County Charter Review Committee, addresses the county board of commissioners Wednesday morning in Pendleton concerning the committee's recommendation to hire a county manager.

See Charter, Page A7

