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WINNER OF THE 2019 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

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City gives The Lodge \$80,000 for renovation

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — In about a minute's time, the Pendleton Development Commission granted the owner of The Lodge \$80,572 for extensive internal and external renovations for the bar and performance venue.

Acting as the development commission, members of the Pendleton City Council quickly agreed to cover 40% of the cost of \$201,428, which includes sign restoration and installation, an exterior paint job, heating, ventilation and air conditioning replacement, and plumbing and electrical work.

The commission already approved the façade and upper story grants in July, but it deferred on assigning a dollar amount as The Lodge owner Lance Leonnig spent more time refining his grant request.

An electrician by trade, Leonnig bought the old Pendleton Elks Lodge in late 2018.

Since then, The Lodge has hosted several concerts in its auditorium and simultaneously opened up some of the building's multiple bars to serve drinks during the shows.

Leonnig has already put in some sweat equity into restoring the defunct fraternal hall and estimates he will contribute \$20,500 in labor to repaint the faded exterior.

He's also been successful in obtaining grants, previously obtaining a share of a \$155,609 Oregon Main Street grant and securing \$6,000 from Umatilla County.

Arriving to the meeting after the vote, Leonnig thanked the city for its support.

"This HVAC package couldn't come soon enough," he said.

The Lodge is hosting multiple events during Round-Up week and Leonnig said he just booked a "big event" in December.

The council was similarly complimentary.

Councilor Scott Fairley said he's heard good things about the events The Lodge hosts, and Mayor John Turner said the city wants to see the project succeed.

"With you guys helping out, it should keep it from sinking," Leonnig said.

Although more than \$80,000 is significant expenditure for the urban renewal district, its grant programs remain under budget.

The façade grant is spending \$42,387 for The Lodge, but even with the new grant on the books, it's only expected to spend a fraction of the \$279,900 budget.

The \$49,708 from the upper story fund is relatively cheap compared to its expected expenditures.

The rest of the money is set to go to Pendleton developer Al Plute, a former city councilor, who should get \$130,000 for his project to convert Bowman Building office space into apartments.

Although the grant hasn't been approved yet, the development commission is also projecting Plute to receive \$225,000 in upper story grant funds for his Odd Fellows Building project.

But all those projects combined still come in well below the upper story program's half-million budget.

TOUGH QUESTIONS, HONEST ANSWERS



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Eighth-grader Hunter Houck asks Rep. Greg Walden about climate change and the Green New Deal during Wednesday's town hall in Heppner.

Walden questioned on Green New Deal and bipartisanship at Heppner town hall

By ALEX CASTLE
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — While many Morrow County residents used Wednesday's town hall in Heppner to bring up concerns of divisiveness in the current political climate with Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River, the congressman's toughest question came from 13-year-old activist Hunter Houck about the climate itself.

"I read that you don't currently support the Green New Deal," Houck said. "Could you elaborate on why not?"

Nearing the end of his third and final town hall of the day, Walden began his response by asking Houck's age and then answered him by describing the Green New Deal as "aspirational goals rather than legislative ones."

"I think there are other ways to get to where they want," he said, presenting a prepared slide that showed the high costs of the deal that includes Medicare For All.

Walden reassured Houck and Morrow County residents that he "thinks the climate is changing and we are contributing to it," but said the solution will be careful to protect con-



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Rep. Greg Walden answers a question Wednesday at a town hall in Heppner.

sumers and will focus on innovations. The congressman added that there's already a number of efforts in hydro-power and maximizing the electrical grid that are underway in the U.S.

"Thank you for your question, it's your generation that's going to be really effective," Walden said to end his response.

"I thought that his was response was nice and honest," Houck said after the meeting. "Personally, I disagree with his lack of support and think that Congress should support the Green New Deal and work as hard as they can to keep the planet awe-

some for my generation."

Houck, who was excused from afternoon classes at Heppner Middle School for the meeting, has been traveling around the region to attend town halls and question politicians about their stances on climate change and the Green New Deal.

In July, Houck asked Sen. Jeff Merkley the same questions at a town hall meeting in Boardman. And back in May, Houck and his friends organized an event titled "Fight for our Future," which was a protest urging

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Pendleton Police Department welcomes new K-9

By BEN LONERGAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Members of the Pendleton Police Department were given the opportunity Wednesday morning to welcome the newest addition to their department, K-9 Officer Bali. Bali, who will officially join the department in early summer, spent the gathering meeting his new co-workers and acclimating to the station.

If all goes well, Bali will begin training with his handler, Pendleton Police Officer Cass Clark, in the spring for five to 10 weeks

before transferring to the department. Clark said that while he has been interested in becoming a police officer since he was a child, it was a summer internship with the United States Marshals Service K-9 Unit that made him fall in love with the idea of being a K-9 handler.

"I'm honored to be a part of this program," said Officer Clark. "This opportunity is very rewarding for me personally, but this dog will also be a great asset for our community."

Unlike the department's current dog Lucy, who will retire early next year, K-9

Bali will be trained in not only drug detection but also tracking and capture of subjects. While the exact list of substances that Bali will be trained to detect is still under discussion, he will not be trained to detect marijuana products due to the legalization of recreational marijuana in the state of Oregon.

"Not only will the dog help with drug detection," said Corporal John Lehman, "the dog will be trained for tracking and catching subjects as well, making it a more versatile



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
K-9 Bali sits and chews on a toy during a conversation about the future of his training Wednesday morning. K-9 Bali will join the Pendleton Police Department in early summer.

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