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PENDLETON

Structural walls sound after We Sell Stuff fire

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The historic commercial building at 342 S.W. First St. has withstood the test of time, and apparently, a fire as well. Pendleton Building Official Ty Woolsey sent an email to City Attorney Nancy Kerns on Sept. 30 suggesting the remaining structure after a Sept. 29 fire that gutted the building was structurally sound.

In the email, Woolsey wrote that the roof diaphragm that held up the top third of the wall collapsed, but “(m)inus a seismic event I wouldn’t expect a structural collapse of any of the building’s exterior walls.”

The structure was formerly occupied by the We Sell Stuff thrift store, and store owner Greg Dixson said an electrical short caused the late September blaze.

Besides destroying the business and collapsing the roof, the fire caused some nearby businesses to temporarily close as they dealt with smoke damage or water run-off from the fire hoses.

In an interview Monday, Woolsey said a roof support beam from the burning building collapsed and punctured the commercial building at 339 S. Main St., which houses Lavender Mercantile Co. Woolsey said the beam opened a hole where smoke could enter, but no more damage than that.

Although the building is now closed and cordoned off from the public, building owner Henry Lorenzen will have to make a decision soon on the future of the building.

Lorenzen has until Nov. 28 to submit a letter to City Manager Robb Corbett informing him on whether he plans to repair or demolish the building.

According to city law, Lorenzen has six months from the fire to begin demolition or repair on the building and a year from the fire to complete the project, although he can apply for an extension with Corbett.

In his email, Woolsey wrote that the building owner will need to apply for a permit regardless of whether he opts for repair or demolition. If he aims to restore the building, Woolsey wrote that Lorenzen would need to hire an engineer and provide construction documents before receiving a permit.

Lorenzen did not return two calls and a text message sent to his phone on Monday. His voicemail box message said it was full.

WALDEN WON’T SEEK RE-ELECTION IN 2020



Staff photo by Kathy Aney, File

Rep. Greg Walden answers a question on Aug. 29, 2019, during a town hall in Heppner. Walden, R-Hood River, announced Monday morning that he will not seek a new term in Congress in 2020.

The only Republican member of the Oregon congressional delegation was elected in 1998

By **GARY A. WARNER**
EO Media Group

HOOD RIVER — U. S. Rep. Greg Walden, the only Republican in Oregon’s congressional delegation, announced Monday he will not run again in 2020.

“I will not seek re-election to the U.S. House of Representatives, nor election to any other office,” Walden, 62, said in a video statement. “Instead I will close the public service chapter of my life, thankful for the friends I’ve made and the successful work we’ve done together.”

Walden’s departure means the 2nd Congressional District seat will be up for grabs for the first time in a generation. Walden was first elected in 1998 and won 10 re-election bids. Walden beat Democratic opponents by more than 60% of the vote in his heavily Republican district until Jamie McLeod-Skinner of Terrebonne held him to 56% in 2018.

The 2nd Congressional District includes Umatilla, Morrow, Baker, Union and Walla counties, as well as most of Eastern Oregon and much of Southern Oregon. Walden is from Hood River. He is the only Republican among the five House members from Oregon. Both U.S. senators — Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley — are Democrats.

Walden became the 22nd Republican member of Congress to announce their retirement before the 2020 election, which will include the re-election bid of

President Donald Trump. Seven Democrats have said they won’t run. Walden is the fourth GOP House member who lost a committee chairmanship last year because of the majority switch who has announced they are leaving next year.

Walden said he was not retiring out of any concern that he could lose re-election or fail to regain the House majority, where he had served as chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee before Democrats took control in 2018. He is now ranking member of the committee.

“I am confident I could earn the support of 2nd District voters for another term,” he said. “I’m also optimistic that a path exists for Republicans to recapture a majority in the House.”

Walden, whose background is in radio, gave no specifics about what he will do after he retires from Congress.

“For me, the time has come to pursue new challenges and opportunities,” he said.

Walden’s statement would appear to rule out running for any other political office next year. Merkley is running for a third term in the U.S. Senate. Oregon’s secretary of state, attorney general and treasurer positions are also on the ballot. As the state’s most high-profile Republican, Walden could be pressured to run for governor in 2022 when Gov. Kate Brown is ineligible for re-election due to

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NOT SEEKING RE-ELECTION

Oregon GOP Rep. Greg Walden announced Monday that he would retire when his current term ends in January 2021 — becoming the 22nd House Republican to retire, resign or seek another office since the 116th Congress convened in January. Seven Democrats have retired or resigned in that time. Other GOP lawmakers not seeking re-election for various reasons include Reps. Darrell Issa of California, Greg Gianforte of Montana, Mac Thornberry of Texas, Sean Duffy of Wisconsin and John Shimkus of Illinois, according to CNN, which published a list of those departing.

— *Washington Post and New York Post*

WHAT THEY’RE SAYING

The following are what people around the state and the nation are saying about the announcement that Greg Walden will not seek re-election in 2020.

“We applaud and thank Greg for his tireless years in public service and wish him the very best in his next chapter. Thank you, Congressman Walden, for the time, energy, and unwavering dedication you have given to all Oregonians.”

— *Oregon Farm Bureau*

“Greg’s career has been defined by success — as a committed local broadcaster, as a bipartisan political bridge builder, and as a brilliant legislator. Congress is a better place because of Greg Walden, and I’m certain he will make a positive difference in whatever path his future may hold.”

— *Gordon Smith, National Association of Broadcasters CEO*

“Walden is a class act and political juggernaut who will be sorely missed in Washington. I spoke to Greg and he assured me that he will remain heavily engaged in ensuring this seat remains in Republican hands.”

— *Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Minn.*

“He was a great chair of our Energy & Commerce Committee, always working to promote bipartisanship and fairness. I wish him the very best in his retirement and hope that he spends much deserved time with his family and enjoying the natural beauty of Oregon. He served Oregonians honorably for over two decades and his presence in Congress will be missed.”

— *Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Ore.*

“Walden’s decision not to seek re-election demonstrates the power of our efforts last year to flip the House and establish accountability. Since his statement, I’ve received a lot of calls, and I’m going to take a little time to return them.”

— *Jamie McLeod-Skinner, who ran against Walden in 2018 and is currently running for secretary of state*

Girls in Science avert zombie apocalypse

Eastern Oregon University hosts the annual event for area middle school girls to delve into science

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — The girls dipped the white plastic spoons into the white plastic buckets and scooped up the gelatinous zombie flesh. Protective goggles in place, they were careful to plop the slimy substance into plastic zip-top bags.

Eastern Oregon University biology student Brady Layman told the group they next had to “squish it.” All part of preparing the yellowish muck to test for that basic com-

ponent of life, DNA. Adrian Middle School student Delia Deroin squished away.

She was one of roughly 100 Eastern Oregon girls in grades six through eight Saturday at the university in La Grande taking part in Girls in Science. The event since 2001 strives to provide girls a fun but education-filled day with hands-on exploration using math, technology and science.

EOU chemistry professor Anna Cavinato explained the scenarios vary year to year but the focus is on using science to answer a mystery.

“I think it’s a great opportunity for the girls to engage in the discovery process,” she said.

Sometimes the students work



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Noemi Alvarez Barroso, a student at Sunridge Middle School, shines a light into the eyes of a volunteer dressed as a zombie to test dilation of pupils during the 2019 Girls in Science event at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande on Saturday.

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