

More funds granted for Athena building restoration

Historic Stahl building to be divided into multiple uses

By CHLOE LEVALLEY
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

ATHENA — A \$30,000 grant was recently awarded to the Athena Mainstreet Association to install two Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant restrooms in the historic Stahl building on Main Street.

The funding comes from the F.J. Hodecker Family Fund, Carl J. and Alma Johnson Fund and Betty Lou Roberts Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation, according to an announcement this week.

The 9,000-square-foot building in downtown Athena was purchased in 2016 from the Pendleton Grain Growers by the Mainstreet Association.

It will be divided into multiple uses, but a large portion of the building will be for a community and event center. Other parts of the building will be for the Athena Mainstreet Association's home office, a shared workspace for others in the com-



Downtown Athena has two ongoing renovation projects including the Stahl building — the white building with PGG in red letters — and the historic Gem Theater. Both, originally built as breweries in the 1900s, are now being restored for the community to use and enjoy.

munity, and a business, said Association President April Vorhauer-Flatt.

Funding will cover the costs of professional labor and hardware for bathrooms that will make the building accessible to everyone in the community, Vorhauer-Flatt said.

More than \$100 million in

grants and scholarships support Oregonians annually through the Oregon Community Foundation, according to the release.

The Athena Mainstreet Association received a \$172,000 grant in May from Oregon Heritage Commission to pay for an oil furnace malfunction cleanup, electrical

upgrades and a heating, ventilation and air conditioning system, Vorhauer-Flatt said.

“This has been a really great year for us to get the funding that’ll make these projects be able to be completed,” she said.

The Mainstreet Association hopes to make the space usable to the community in

one to two years, the president said.

“Were really excited to have a space for the community that really feels like it belongs to everybody in the community. When this building was purchased, we actually received about 15 donations from local families of \$1,000,”

Vorhauer-Flatt said.

A hardware store occupied the building previously.

“That was a store I was in every day. We were all sick to our stomachs when it closed. We didn’t want it to be turned into a warehouse,” Rob McIntyre, who was one of the thousand-dollar donors, said.

He and his wife were a part of the initial process of purchasing the building with other community members for the Mainstreet Association, McIntyre said.

McIntyre is working on the 15-year renovation of the Gem Theater next to the Stahl building. These two buildings were competing breweries in the early 1900s, he said.

“It’s an anchor building, right on the main intersection. ... It is viable for Main Street,” he said.

“Even though the Mainstreet Association owns the title to the building, it really feels like a community-owned building. This whole process has been a grassroots effort from the people of Athena, so to serve them the best we can and really make sure it is inclusive place that it is accessible is really important to the mission,” Vorhauer-Flatt said.

Man accused of murder undergoing treatment

Colby Hedman to receive three months of ‘competency restoration treatment’

By EMILY THORNTON
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — A man accused of killing a Whitman College employee may never have an arraignment.

Colby J. Hedman, 24, whose last known address was in Heppner, has been ordered to receive three months of “competency restoration treatment” at Eastern State Hospital in Medical Lake, according to court records. He only will plead “if his competency is restored,” Walla Walla County Prosecutor Jim Nagle said.

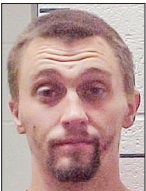
Hedman’s arraignment was continued in September, as lawyers were awaiting

results of a competency evaluation. On Nov. 18, an order for treatment was entered, stating “the defendant

lacks the capacity to assist in his/her own defense as a result of mental disease or defect.” He was admitted into inpatient treatment for 90 days at the Department of Social and Health Services’s hospital.

He may or may not receive medication or other therapy to determine if his competency can be restored. If medication is required, any future detention facility must continue it unless a no forced medication order exists.

A status hearing was scheduled for Feb. 10, 2020, to see if the hospital issued a report before the end of the 90 days, Nagle said.



Hedman

Hedman’s bail was set at \$1 million in September, after he was extradited from Baker County on charges of first-degree murder and vehicle theft in connection with the slaying of Kyle Martz, 35, of Walla Walla, in July.

Hedman admitted to police he struck Martz with an ax multiple times before stealing his car and fleeing to Oregon, where he was arrested near Baker City, after trying to elude police the same day. Police suspect the two didn’t know each other.

He also allegedly broke into a home on Taggart Lane in Oregon and moved items from Martz’s pickup truck into the homeowners’ truck. He then allegedly fled on foot after deputies confronted him, but later returned to the home and took off in a Jeep, which he totaled after leading police on a chase, reports stated.

Gas tax increase begins New Year’s Day

East Oregonian

SALEM — The second of four increases in the gas tax goes into effect Jan. 1. The increase is part of House Bill 2017, the “Keep Oregon Moving” act the Oregon Legislature passed in 2017.

This is the second 4-cents, per-gallon increase. The first went into effect in 2018.

Under the new law, Oregon lawmakers set requirement the Oregon Department of Transportation and Oregon cities and counties must meet to trigger the increase. The Oregon Transportation Commission sent the Legislature a report outlining how ODOT and local govern-

ments met those requirements. Two more 2-cent gas tax increases in 2022 and 2024 are on deck — but if ODOT meets additional accountability requirements for a total of 10 cents.

The legislation tied the gas tax increases to ODOT completing two specific projects to help address congestion on Interstate 205. The state road department also worked with Oregon cities and counties to produce a website detailing the condition of the major roads and all Oregon bridges. The site grades the major roads in and through communities as good, fair or poor so people can see what they’re getting for their

increased taxes.

ODOT also had to provide a list of shovel-ready projects that could be constructed with additional funds and report on the agency’s efforts to address congestion through a number of other important projects in the Portland metro region.

At full implementation in 2024, Oregon’s gas tax will be 40 cents a gallon, still less than the gas tax in either Washington or California. The law also allows counties and cities to add their own local gas tax.

BRIEFLY

M-F man suffers self-inflicted gunshot wound

MILTON-FREEWATER — A Milton-Freewater man was hospitalized Wednesday evening after suffering a self-inflicted gunshot wound, according to a press release from the Milton-Freewater Police Department.

Johnson Le, 35, was transported by Milton-Freewater Rural EMS to St. Mary Hospital in Walla Walla, Washington, with a nonlife-threatening injury. Police said that Le suffered a self-inflicted gunshot wound to his arm.

According to the press release, police received a phone call shortly after 9 p.m., from Le’s wife, Maria Morales, 50, claiming that an unidentified masked person had entered the backyard of the residence and had shot her husband.

Members of the Milton-Freewater Police Department, Oregon State Police and Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office responded to the residence at 308 Miller St., Milton-Freewater.

Police said the investigation revealed Le shot himself with a 9mm Glock pistol, and made up a false story about a robbery to attempt to hide and cover up gambling

debt. There were no other individuals involved in the incident.

Milton-Freewater Chief of Police Doug Boedigheimer said Thursday morning that no arrests have been made and the incident remains under investigation.

One dead in Highway 730 crash

UMATILLA COUNTY — A two-vehicle crash resulted in one death on Highway 730 on Wednesday night.

A 1990 Ford F-150 pickup truck headed westbound near milepost 202 crossed into the eastbound lane and collided with a 2011 Volvo semitruck driving by Steven Unruh, 64, of Nampa, Idaho, according to a preliminary investigation conducted by the Oregon State Police.

OSP troopers responded to the scene at around 8:40 p.m., according to a press release.

Police said the driver of the pickup truck, whose name has yet to be released, suffered fatal injuries.

The crash resulted in a four-hour highway closure.

Unruh was transported to Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston.

County hires new medical examiner

UMATILLA COUNTY — The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners hired a new medical examiner during its Wednesday meeting.

Aimee Rogers, M.D., will take over from Jon Hitzmann, the county’s medical director, who has been filling in on an interim basis. Rogers, a urologist for St. Anthony Hospital, starts Jan. 1.

Board chair George Murdock said in an email that the county is excited that Rogers was interested in the position and hopes to be able to serve for many years. He said the medical examiner is a “key component” working with the district attorney, law enforcement, area funeral homes, the state medical examiner’s office and families grieving loved ones.

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