



INSIDE

2022 CALENDAR SHOWCASES PHOTOS FROM LOCALS

THE BEAM THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Two downtown Pendleton projects are hoping a century-old wooden beam from an old theater will pay major dividends.

In early December, Parley Pearce hauled off two parts of a 50-foot beam that once graced the Rivoli Theater balcony. Pearce wants to put the beam to work again as a feature of the Oak Hotel as he looks to reopen the defunct brothel as a boutique hotel. The Rivoli Restoration Coalition thinks the antique architecture could help as a fundraising item as the nonprofit continues its ongoing quest to reopen the historic theater as a performing arts center.

The coalition acquired the Rivoli in 2012 and has spent the past several years in the early stages of renovating its interior. Work crews from Kirby Nagelhout Construction Co. retrieved the beam as a part of the renovation effort, and the coalition has long

tried to find someone to sell or donate the beam to.

The coalition found a willing partner in Pearce, who has made it a priority to restore another historic downtown property. After removing the beam pieces from the Rivoli property, Pearce sent them to a mill in Adams to be restored.

“Heavy items are my personal hobby,” Pearce said.

A part of the beam will be returned to the Rivoli once its finished, although coalition President Andrew Picken said it won’t be reinstalled or repurposed at the theater. Counting the rings on the wood used for the century-old beam, Picken estimated the Douglas fir used for the beam was 400 years old at the time it was cut down. The coalition is hopeful the antique quality of the beam means it could be a fundraising tool by auctioning it off.

“We didn’t chop it up and put it in a landfill,” Picken said.

Additionally, the coalition gave a much smaller section of the beam to an instrument maker, who intends to build new instruments out of the wood and then auction them



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

The grain on a beam from the Rivoli Theater in Pendleton is visible Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021, before Eric Sederburg mills the beam at his operation in Adams for use in the Oak Hotel in Pendleton.

off for the benefit of the Rivoli restoration.

Pearce intends to put his own section of the beam back to work in the service of the Oak Hotel. Built in 1904, Pearce, a former owner of Hamley & Co., said the Oak began its life as a brothel at a time when the sex industry was common in the downtown area. Even after prostitution was outlawed in town and the Oak converted itself to a hotel and boarding house, Pearce said the business continued to operate a brothel illicitly for years.

The Oak Hotel has since fallen into disuse, but Pearce

has amassed a large collection of antique furniture and art in the building with the goal of turning it into a boutique hotel. Under Pearce’s vision, the hotel would include 25 rooms and be restored to evoke the turn of the 20th century. The Rivoli beam would be repurposed to support the Oak’s balcony.

While the pandemic pushed back the project’s timeline, Pearce said he already has obtained a permit from the city to start some work on the building with the intention of starting construction in 2022.

See Beam, Page A7

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Eric Sederburg on Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021, demonstrates how he intends to mill a large beam from Pendleton’s Rivoli Theater at his sawmill in Adams.



OSAA REDISTRICTING

Pendleton moves to 4A

Bucks will play in the GOL with La Grande, Baker and Ontario

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Pendleton Athletic Director Mike Somnis knew about six weeks ago the Bucks were destined to drop from 5A to 4A and join the Greater Oregon League.

The executive board of the Oregon School Activities Association made that final Monday, Dec. 13, when it approved the last recommendation of the Classification and Redistricting Committee. The decision will bring changes to several leagues throughout the state starting with the 2022 fall season.

“I think everyone is excited and ready to make the move,” Somnis said. “We have been very competitive at the 5A level. The reality of it is, with Hermiston going to the WIAA, and Hood River going to 5A and to the Northwest Oregon Conference, if we stayed, we would be in the Bend league. It will be a seamless fit.”

Pendleton will join GOL teams La Grande, Baker City and Ontario. McLoughlin is moving down to the 3A Eastern Oregon League.

La Grande and Baker are ecstatic that Pendleton is joining their league.

“We are very pleased to have Pendleton in our league,” La Grande AD Darren Goodman said. “It will help strengthen our league. Everyone will have to raise their game, for sure.”

“The GOL will definitely be more competitive now,” Baker AD Buell Gonzales Jr. added. “The issue with the scheduling is still there with just four teams. Losing Mac-Hi and gaining Pendleton, our league is more competitive and balanced. We didn’t want to lose La Grande. This worked out the best for everyone involved.”

Pendleton is one of a handful of local teams the redistricting affects.

In addition to Mac-Hi moving to 3A, Irrigon will drop down to the 2A Blue Mountain Conference, and Pilot Rock will drop to the 1A Old Oregon League with Griswold and Nixyaawii.

The Mac-Hi, Irrigon and Pilot Rock moves benefit the schools, which have recently seen enrollment drop.

See OSAA, Page A7



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

Pendleton’s James Thatcher leads Braxton Bisenius, of La Grande, in the 1,500 meters race at the Pendleton Triad track meet on April 30, 2021. Pendleton High is dropping to 4A in the fall of 2022 and joining La Grande, Baker City and Ontario in the Greater Oregon League.

Oregon lawmakers OK rent, drought relief

BY PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau



Julia Shumway/Oregon Capital Chronicle

State Rep. Julie Fahey, D-Eugene, encourages her colleagues to vote for a bill to extend Oregon’s safe harbor protections from eviction during a special legislative session Monday, Dec. 13, 2021.

SALEM — Oregon lawmakers cleared the way in a scripted special session for \$100 million more in state rental assistance and \$100 million more for local efforts to prevent evictions.

During the one-day special session on Monday, Dec. 13, lawmakers also approved \$25 million for enforcement against illegal cannabis-growing in Southern Oregon and \$18 million for resettlement of up to 1,200 refugees who fled after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. They also released \$100 million already set aside for relief from the continuing drought in outlying areas of Oregon.

Portland, Gresham, Hillsboro and Beaverton are among the 14 cities that will receive \$1 million each to deal with homelessness.

Gov. Kate Brown called the special

session, the year’s second, to approve more rental assistance and extend the grace period for evictions stemming from the coronavirus pandemic. But the final agenda came together just a few days beforehand, when Brown and legislative leaders from both parties agreed to include a few other items.

“There was no plan. No agreement. Success was not guaranteed. Your Legislature worked hard since that day,” Senate President Peter Courtney, the veteran Salem Democrat, said. “Oregonians can be proud of their legislators today, Democrat and Republican. We came together to send relief — hope — to Oregonians in crisis.”

Minority Republicans had resisted a special session, though not the rental assistance, which they said could have been approved by the 20-member Emergency Board.

See Lawmakers, Page A7