

John Day gears up for Main Street facelift

Expansion of Kam Wah Chung State Historic Site could draw 20,000-plus tourists a year

By BENNETT HALL
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — City officials are working with downtown business owners on ideas for making John Day's Main Street a more inviting place to be.

Of course, projects like this take money, and the city is working on a two-pronged approach to financing.

Up to \$200,000 in competitive grant funding is available this year from Oregon's Main Street revitalization program, and owners of businesses and properties within the Main Street revitalization area are being encouraged to collaborate on an application for that money.

In addition, the city has a \$1 million grant to make infrastructure improvements in support of the planned expansion of the Kam Wah Chung State Historic Site on Canton Street, and some of that money could be used for Main Street improvements.

Ideas for Main Street improvements were kicked around in a meeting on Jan.



Richard Hanners/Blue Mountain Eagle, File

Len's Drug received a \$200,000 state grant in 2019 to help the business expand west into the area on Main Street that was then occupied by the Corner Cup.

12 at the John Day Fire Hall.

Among the suggestions were new signs, exterior lighting, facade improvements, awnings, better street lighting and murals.

The Oregon Main Street grant program shut down temporarily during the pandemic but has been restarted. Communities participating in the Oregon Main Street Network, such as John Day, can apply for grants of up to \$200,000 for

revitalization projects.

The last grant John Day got went toward the remodeling and expansion of Len's Drug at the intersection of Main Street and Canyon Boulevard in 2019. Prior to that, the city obtained a grant to help with renovation of the Weaver Building at 131 W. Main St.

The consensus at the Jan. 12 meeting was that, this time around, the grant application should go toward improve-

ments at multiple businesses and the Main Street corridor as a whole.

"One business gets \$200,000 or whatever, that just doesn't seem fair to me," said Janet Hill, owner of the Floor Store and Java Jungle. "I really would like to see it kind of be distributed through downtown."

Sherrie Rininger, owner of Etc., agreed.

"The past two grants have gone to individual projects,"

she said, "and I really think this one needs to be spread around."

City Councilor Heather Rookstool said she'd like to see better streetlights to improve downtown safety since the city shut down its police department.

"Lighting needs to be a priority," she said.

Downtown business owners with ideas about the Main Street revitalization grant were encouraged to contact 1188 Brewing Co. owner Shannon Adair, who also serves on the city council and is taking the lead on the grant application.

"The availability of these funds is really exciting," she said. "Because we got Main Street funds before, I think we have a really good chance."

The application deadline is in March.

City Manager Nick Green said whether the Main Street grant application is successful or not, the city plans to use some of the \$1 million in state funding it received to make infrastructure improvements in support of the Kam Wah Chung expansion to enhance downtown.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kam Wah Chung State Historic Site attracted around 10,000 visitors a year to John Day.

But now the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is planning a major expansion on the former Gleason Park property, including a multimillion-dollar interpretive center, and visitor numbers are expected to double or even triple when that happens.

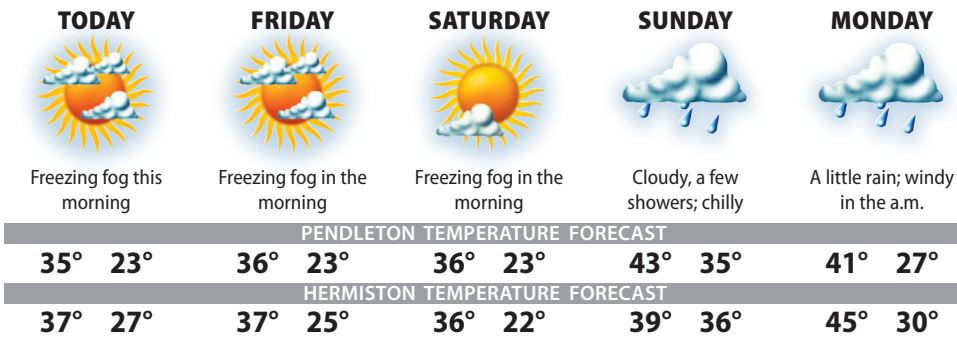
"That's what we're planning for, but the reality is it's anybody's guess," Green said in an interview.

City officials want to take economic advantage of the influx of tourists by making it easy for foot traffic to move back and forth between Kam Wah Chung and the downtown business district a few blocks away. And once they get to downtown, the city wants to make the Main Street corridor as inviting as possible so visitors will spread their tourism money around.

A big chunk of the \$1 million in state money for infrastructure will go toward sidewalk improvements on Canton and Main streets between Kam Wah Chung and downtown, Green said, but some of what's left over can go toward enhancing downtown businesses.

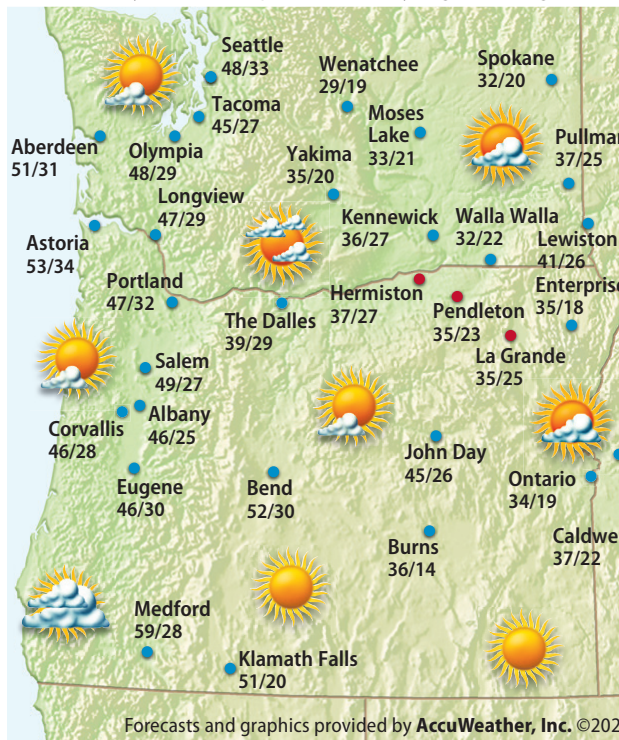
"There's definitely a nexus," Green said, "between visitors coming to that site and visitors coming to downtown."

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



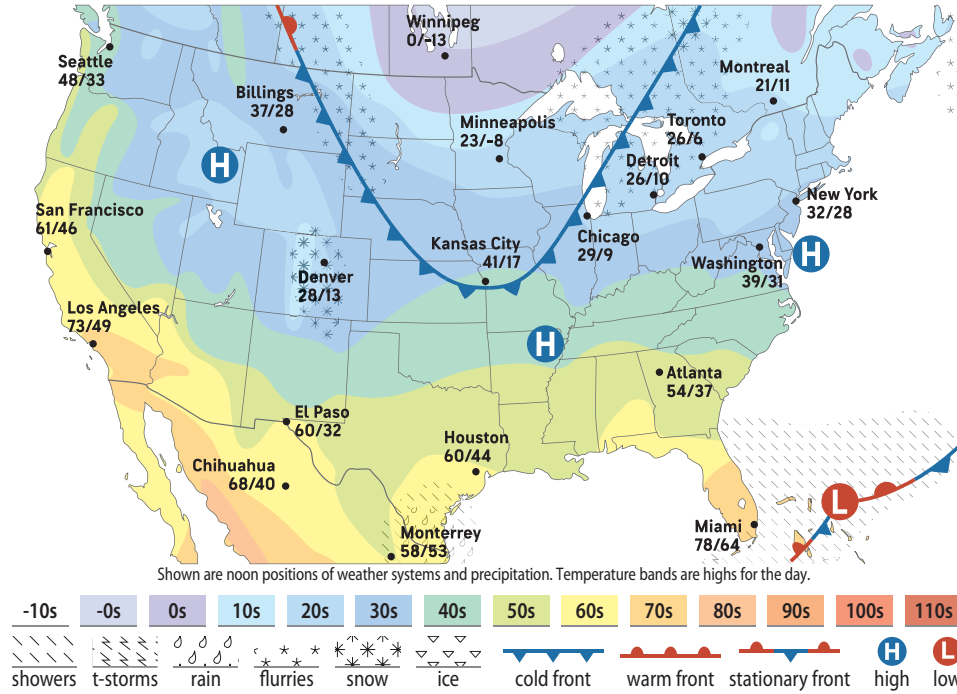
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	30°	27°	
Normals	43°	29°	
Records	67° (1934)	-18° (1957)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	1.47"		
Normal month to date	1.30"		
Year to date	1.47"		
Last year to date	0.78"		
Normal year to date	1.30"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	34°	31°	
Normals	44°	29°	
Records	67° (2003)	-31° (1957)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.89"		
Normal month to date	0.97"		
Year to date	0.89"		
Last year to date	0.49"		
Normal year to date	0.97"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	Fri.		
Boardman	NE 4-8	ENE 3-6	
Pendleton	N 4-8	N 6-12	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	7:22 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	4:54 p.m.		
Moonrise today	3:01 a.m.		
Moonset today	12:09 p.m.		
New First Full Last			
Jan 31	Feb 8	Feb 16	Feb 23

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 85° in Key West, Fla. Low -36° in Hibbing, Minn.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Proposal seeks to quiet train whistles within Baker City

By SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — The newest member of the Baker City Council wants the city to pursue a railroad quiet zone within the city limits rather than ask voters to weigh in on the issue.

Dean Guyer, who was appointed on Dec. 14 to fill the lone vacancy on the seven-member city council, asked his colleagues during their regular meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 25, to move ahead with the quiet zone plan proposed more than two years ago by a group of residents.

That group also has offered to raise the estimated \$150,000 needed to upgrade five railroad crossings to make it harder for a vehicle to reach the tracks while a train is passing. Federal rules require those improvements for a city to qualify for a quiet zone.

"I'm a believer that people put city council folks in charge to make decisions on their behalf, no different than what we see at the state level and or at the US government level," Guyer said Jan. 24. "If there is a reason for the voters to vote on everything that comes up in city council, then what's the purpose of city council?"

In a quiet zone — a designation La Grande and Pendleton each have, two of 13 quiet zones in Oregon — freight trains are not required to sound their whistles when approaching a street crossing.

Train crews still trigger their warning whistles at their discretion — if, for instance, they saw a vehicle or pedestrian on or near the tracks.

In Baker City, where about 24 freight trains roll through each day and there are five crossings within the city limits, trains moving at 50 mph have to use their whistles

almost constantly to comply with the requirement that the warning be sounded at least 15 seconds, and no more than 20 seconds, in advance of reaching public crossings.

The city council most recently discussed the quiet zone issue in October 2021, when it was still a six-member group. During the Oct. 12 meeting, councilors deadlocked twice on 3-3 votes.

Guyer, in his proposal, writes that although city staff could work on aspects of the quiet zone project as part of their normal work, money raised by the citizens group would be used "exclusively" to pay for crossing improvements.

The city also could sponsor grant applications promoted by the group.

Under Guyer's proposal, the council would direct the city staff to make the quiet zone a priority for 2022-23, and to make the safety improvements at crossings "when sufficient external funds are available."

IN BRIEF

McGregor Co. expands into Eastern Oregon

COLFAX, Wash. — The McGregor Co. has acquired Inland Chemical Service in Condon and Sherman County Farm Chemical in Wasco.

Both Oregon companies were founded in the early 1950s, according to a press release from The McGregor Co.

Terms of the acquisition were not released. "We are thrilled to be able to join forces with both Inland Chemical and Sherman County Farm Chemical," Ian McGregor, president of The McGregor Co., said in a press release. "We are humbled to have the trust of their teams and are committed to earning the trust of the growers they serve. The addition of these teams will greatly expand our reach into Central Oregon and we're looking

forward to a long-term future there." "The McGregor Co. has been a supply partner for some time and we have a great deal of respect for their business. We think they will be a great member of the community," said Bob Faria, Sherman County Farm Chemical president.

"We're excited to have the additional resources and support that The McGregor Co. will bring to our business. We look forward to working together with a long-term family business like ourselves," said Lane Halderson, Inland Chemical Service president.

The McGregor Co., with headquarters in Colfax, Washington, has 40 retail agronomy locations across the Pacific Northwest. McGregor provides crop inputs, application equipment and services, risk management and more.

— EO Media Group

CORRECTIONS: The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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