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A view from nearby

Arnold Wardwell owns AEW Welding and Custom Fabrication, 514 S.E. Emigrant Ave., inside Lapp's Auto Body Repair across the avenue from Grain Craft's elevator.

"This morning at about 6, I saw pictures of the flour mill on fire online," Wardwell said. "I was watching when I left for work."

Wardwell went to school with a farmer whom he helps out during harvest.

"My son runs the welding shop while I'm working harvest," he said. "We had some equipment in the shop not covered by insurance, so we needed to get it out. Also a friend's

That was around 8:30 to 9 a.m.

"We got out before the whole perimeter was set up," he said. "The fire department went up on the roof to put out embers. My son was there when the fire started yesterday afternoon, with white smoke, before it burst into flames early this morning."

Wardwell said he hopes his son could get back to work Aug. 11

"We've got some projects that we need to get done soon," he said.

Building integrity becomes the question

Buildings at the mill began to collapse around 9:30 a.m. Pierotti said there was a concern about a full building collapse.

"After roof collapse, the building is burning down from the interior, which works for us," he said, "reduces threat to exposed build-

He added firefighters think the full interior collapsed but could not confirm because no one has gone inside.

Umatilla County Sheriff's Office brought in its search and rescue drone to look for hot spots and check the integrity of the building, as firefighters continued to pour water on the north side. Resources began pulling back around 9:45 a.m. and sending outside agencies back to their jurisdictions,

"They feel like it's under control enough," Pendleton Police Chief Chuck Byram said at the scene.

Pendleton Fire Lt. paramedic Jared Uselman was one of the people working with the drone. He said the whole building was a shell, and on the south side where there's office spaces fires were burning. Pendleton fire was not sending in people because the risk of collapse was too high.

Fire could burn for days

Umatilla County closed the courthouse, 216 S.E. Fourth St., and the emergency prompted the closures of roads in a four-block radius around the mill. Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer said the county opened the courthouse to rehab firefighters.

The Oregon Department of Human Services reported it closed its office in the state building at 800 S.E. Emigrant due to the fire. Staff were working remotely and attempting to contact and/or reschedule



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

PENDLETON FLOUR

The roots of Pendleton Flour

Fisher Flour. The company sold

Mills reach back to 1910 as

bagged flour in the Pacific

Northwest. Over the years,

Pendleton Flour Mills devel-

oped a strong distribution net-

work that evolved to specialize

in bulk shipments via trucks,

The present structure on the

railroad tracks in Pendleton

The mills became known for

its highly successful Power

and Mondako brands, plus

its dedication to providing

personalized customer service

and superior products. These

included premium hard and

soft wheat flour, and propri-

etary blends manufactured

needs.

specifically to meet customers'

In the 1970s, Kerr Pacific Corp.

bought Pendleton Flour Mills

from General Foods Corp. Mil-

ner Milling Co. was formed in

Georgia in the 1990s. In 2001,

Milner formed a joint venture

with the Pendleton operation,

Grain Craft was established in

Mav 2014, when Milner and it

partner Pendleton Flour Mills

acquired Cereal Food Proces-

Kansas. This brought together

three of the most prominent

company was owned by G&L

independent milling com-

panies in the country. The

Holdings, a family holding

Grain Craft, the largest inde-

pendent milling company in

the U.S., on June 21, 2022, an-

nounced its parent company

ment to have Redwood Capital

Investment LLC acquire Grain

Craft. Terms of the transaction

were not disclosed, baking-

wood Capital Investments is

a holding company that has

ily-owned businesses across

a range of industries. Grain

invested in long-standing, fam-

business.com reported.

Based in Baltimore, Red-

had entered into an agree-

company.

sors Inc., of Mission Woods,

which also acquired Fisher

Mills Inc. that year.

was built in the 1920s.

rail and ocean containers.

MILLS HISTORY

Smoke pours from the Grain Craft flour mill in Pendleton the morning of Wednesday, Aug. 10, 2022, as firefighters work to control the blaze.



Angela Davis/Contributed Photo Angela Davis said this chunk of debris from the fire at the Pendleton flour mill struck her home at about 8 a.m. She said she lives about a block from the fire and was watching it from her yard when the hunk of metal flew through the air, hit the front porch roof and landed on the ground.

Pierotti said the fire could burn for days. The building was mostly heavy lumber, and even if it rained, it would not help much.

There was concern Tuesday and early Wednesday morning about the risk of an explosion from wheat dust, he also said.

A dust explosion and ensuing conflagration on July 21, 1947, on the second floor of what then was the Western Milling Company leveled the facility and caused fires that threatened a southeast Pendleton residential neighborhood and the county courthouse. Pierotti said that

threat ebbed as Aug. 10 wore on. But the collapse of the building was possible, so crews were keeping a zone clear in case the structure came down.

The rest of Aug. 10, he said, fire-



Mackenzie Whaley/East Oregonian

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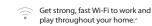
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Guns:

Continued from Page A1

"It could take a couple of years before the Supreme Court hears a challenge," Rowan noted. "While waiting, Oregonians would be deprived of their right to self-defense. In the meantime, those with ill intentions are still going to get a gun, ignoring the provisions for background checks and safety training."

The \$65 fee associated with the measure won't cover even half of the cost of implementing it, Rowan said. The Oregon State Sheriffs' Association estimated the first year cost at \$40 million. The OSSA opposes the measure, and the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police might join them, he

"If a citizen of Pendleton needs a gun for self-defense, who is going to provide the services required by the measure?" Rowan asked. "City police forces lack the time, money and staff. The unfunded, mandated safe handling and storage instruction is an attempt to stall people in purchasing a firearm."

Rowan said he prefers applying stricter penalties on and enforcement of firearms laws already on the books.

"Again, it's all in how the picture is painted," he concluded. "If it's pitched as stopping gun violence, then voters might buy into it. Opponents must emphasize education on the measure's impact. High-capacity magazines are common for legitimate purposes. I hope voters don't repeat the errors of Measure 110, but will realize what else is in it.'

The initiative does not estimate the cost or analyze its impact on small local police departments.

The Oregon State Sheriffs' Association estimated even if a person could somehow complete the required training, the permitting process could cost sheriffs almost \$40 million annually. But nothing in the measure provides any funding, and the fees included would not come close to covering the costs.

"Numerous police departments and sheriff's offices have agreed that complying with this measure will either be exorbitantly expensive or impossible," Starrett said. "None have said they will be offering the training required to apply for the permit to purchase, which sheriffs and local police will be tasked with administering."

Mass shootings boost initiative drive

In early May, the almost all-volunteer Initiative Petition 17 to get the proposals on the ballot had gathered less than a third of the required signatures, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported. But that changed dramatically after shootings in Buffalo, New York and Uvalde, Texas.

Volunteers and donations poured in, and the number of signatures ballooned, according to OPB. By late June, organizers said they had collected sufficient signatures to get the measure on the ballot. Yet they continued the effort to ensure there were enough, in case the Oregon Secretary of State disqualified some. State officials check and validate every signature.

The initiative would close the so-called Charleston loophole by requiring people to pass a background check before buying a gun, The Oregonian reported in May.

Under current federal law, firearms dealers can sell guns without a completed background check if it takes longer than three business days, measure proponents said. That's how the gunman in the 2015 Charleston African Methodist Episcopal Church mass shooting bought the Glock 41 .45 cal. pistol with which he killed nine parishioners.

Critics contend measure threatens legal gun owners

The measure would enact a law requiring a permit issued by a local law enforcement agency to purchase any firearm. Applicants would have to pay a fee, be fingerprinted, complete safety training, and pass a criminal background check.

In addition, the applicant must complete a hands-on demonstration of basic firearms handling to qualify.

"In order to obtain the permit, an applicant would have to show up with a firearm to demonstrate the ability to load, fire, unload, and store the firearm," Williamson, a Salem trial attorney specializing in gun law, said. "But you can't get a firearm without the permit. And under Oregon's highly restrictive gun storage laws, no one can legally loan a firearm to another. That creates an impassable barrier."

H.K. Kahng of Portland served on a five-person committee to write the measure 500-word explanatory statement to appear in the voters' guide this fall. Kahng, an engineer and National Rifle Association firearms instructor, said the permit and training programs create an unfunded mandate with no enforcement measures.

"The measure calls upon the Oregon State Police to come up with these (permitting and training) programs, but there's no consequence if they don't, and there's no time frame for coming up with them," Kahng said during the committee's July 26 meeting.

Williamson also expressed concerns the permit system grants the Oregon State Police "unfettered authority" to inquire into all manner of personal information of the applicant and to deny the applicant the permit for any reason or for simply failing to cooperate.

"No information is off limits," he claimed. "The introduction of highly subjective criteria in (the measure) allows the government significant authority to intrude into the private lives of law-abiding citizens wishing to exercise their protected rights under the Second Amendment."

Opponents also argue that language describing the magazine ban creates confusion.

The measure allows "registered owners" of magazines that hold more than 10 rounds to retain them so long as they were purchased before the

"But how do you prove when you purchased a magazine?" Williamson asked. "There is no magazine 'registration.' They don't have serial numbers. There's no way for the average person to prove they had it before the law was passed. That means citizens must prove their innocence."

Lawfully owned magazines that exceed 10 rounds may not be used for self-defense outside the home. Under the measure, possession would be restricted to the owner's property, at a gunsmith, on a private shooting range or during a firearms competition.

"The minute you leave the house, that 15-round magazine is now illegal, and you could be arrested and charged with a misdemeanor for each magazine in your possession because you're not in your home or at a gun range," Williamson explained. "And you could be charged multiple times for the same magazines since magazines do not contain identifying markings."

"So that could make an otherwise legal gun-owner a criminal overnight," Kahng commented.

"But they would have time to turn those magazines in," committee member Margaret Onley commented. She's an Oregon labor and employment attorney who supports the measure.

In the end, the committee voted 3 to 2 to adopt the explanatory language with minor changes and submitted it to the Oregon Secretary of State for final approval, leaving opponents frustrated.

"I don't think you'll find any precedent in U.S. history in which a citizen has to go through so many hoops to exercise Constitutional rights," Williamson said. "This is the first of its kind, and if it passes, it will wind up in court."





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