

Parks:

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the commission and Wallowa County.

Lockhart is president of the Wallowa Lake Tourism Association.

"I talked a little bit about how tourism has grown exponentially ... and we have a bit of an issue now in that tourism is outpacing our ability to provide the infrastructure to take care of our guests properly," he said June 15.

Lockhart noted that the lack of infrastructure is not just lodging, but everything, parking, stores, restaurants and other amenities.

"We wouldn't have (the infrastructure) if it wasn't for the tourism that supports them during the summer season," he said. "It's important to address the local needs of the people so it doesn't become a burden on them."

Events center

Early June 14, Mac Freeborn, manager of Wallowa Lake State Park, led the group on a tour of various sites at the lake, including the site of the proposed events center at the marina, the site of a proposed property acquisition, the Upper Wallowa River that is slated for res-



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

The Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission met and heard reports and testimony at the Cloverleaf Hall in Enterprise on Wednesday, June 15, 2022. From left are Ashley Schahfer, Steve Gasty, Director Lisa Sumption, Chairwoman Jennifer H. Allen, Johnathan Blaser, Victoria Berger, Liz Hill and Doug Deur.

toration, the Wallowa Falls Campground, the Little Alps day-use area and the Iwetemlaykin State Heritage Site.

The first site — the proposed events center — is slated to be built just east of the current buildings in a couple of years and likely will incorporate some of the current parking lot.

Although it is still early in the planning stage, Freeborn said, a cost of \$3.5 million is estimated for the 3,000-5,000-square-foot building with another \$400,000-\$450,000 for architectural fees.

It will have a 360-degree view with many windows,

a small kitchen, restrooms, changing rooms and dividers so it can be turned into several smaller rooms or opened to one large room.

But the cost won't all come from state coffers, Freeborn said.

"We'd have to do a lot of fundraising," he said. "That's where the stakeholders are coming in. They're going to be key in raising money for this."

Specifically, Freeborn mentioned Lockhart and Chuck Anderson, who heads the annual Oregon's Alpenfest.

Alpenfest, which is regularly held in late Septem-

ber and early October, used to be held in the century-old Edelweiss Inn. However, that building has become too dilapidated and would be too costly to restore, Lockhart has said in the past. Instead, he said June 15, he and his partner, Bill Whittemore, have decided to dismantle it and have offered to let the Parks Department use parts for the events center.

Lockhart and Anderson both expressed their hopes for the center after the meetings.

"We think it would be a good deal for the parks and for everybody," Lockhart said.

Anderson said that with

no viable venue at the lake, Alpenfest will be held Sept. 29 to Oct. 2 at the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo grounds in Joseph.

"I was there to lobby them to move as fast as they can with their planned events center at the state park because when that's built, we're hoping for it to be the new permanent home of Oregon's Alpenfest," Anderson said. "One commissioner asked, 'What are the dates? I want to come.' I passed on a brochure to the commissioners and I'm hoping to see a few of them."

Freeborn said the parking lot at the events center likely will have to be redesigned. He also said the beach area is likely to change with the planned refurbishment of Wallowa Lake Dam.

Ground is expected to be broken on the \$21 million project the fall of 2023, according to Dan Butterfield, president of the Wallowa Lake Irrigation District, which owns the dam.

Freeborn said that once completed, the water level of the lake could rise by 2-4 feet, which will flood some of the current beach area.

Evacuation access

The commissioners also met in the Cloverleaf Hall in Enterprise to conduct rou-

tine business and hear public comments.

One of the written comments submitted involved improving access to the south end of the lake. Currently, only Highway 82 along the east side of the lake provides access.

In an emailed copy of a letter submitted by Thomas F. Kennedy, the South Wallowa Lake Community Firewise Committee has been alerted that the area is one of "extreme risk" in case of fire. There had previously been three exit routes, two of which have been eliminated — partially due to Parks Department actions. The letter stated that committee representatives have met with Freeborn and a letter has been written to Sumption, but "no apparent action to mitigate these risks, has been taken."

Lockhart, too, expressed interest in improving evacuation access.

"The state parks has been awarded a piece of ground that is contiguous to the west side of the mountains," he said. "That way they'd have the west end road and the east end road. ... It would be only used in case of an emergency. ... It would be a gated situation."

No action on the matter was taken by the commission during its meeting.

Teacher:

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Alyse Shetler, and her kindergarten class from Joseph.

She thought that big projects like these were the secret to teaching some of her kids.

"They would be doing what you want them to do, but yet they didn't really feel like it was hard work because it was fun."

And it's this style of learning that may cause her to resonate with the students in Enterprise, even when they've gotten older.

"One girl said to me from junior high the other day 'Mrs. Fischer, you're leaving us, how can you leave us?'"

For Fischer, who prides herself on having a reading endorsement, literature is near and dear to her heart. She remembered what she would tell her students about how to perfect the

craft of writing.

"It's like making a necklace and every word is a stone, a precious gem that you're stringing," she said. "And you've got to make sure you pick each one carefully."

Through all of her years putting effort into educating

"I THINK THAT THE FUTURE WILL JUST BE SIMILAR TO WHAT IT IS NOW, KIDS LEARNING AND TEACHERS TEACHING."

— Lorri Birkmaier Fischer, former elementary school teacher

her students as well as growing up in the school system, Fischer has recognized how much importance a public school can hold in a small town like Enterprise.

"The community, the town revolves around the school," she proclaimed.

Tom Crane, the superintendent of the Enterprise

School District, taught fourth grade at Enterprise Elementary with Fischer at the beginning of his career. He recounted how in every interview he's had as an administrator, he's waited for the teacher to say that they love working with kids, attributing this to the devotion

displayed by his former co-teacher.

When describing Fischer in one word, he emphasized how much his colleague cares.

"Passionate, because her whole life is about helping kids," he said.

Fischer choked up when talking about this aspect

of the job, explaining how important it is for a teacher to put the effort in.

"Every grade, you're that piece," she said. "When you're that person in their life, you have to make the puzzle complete so when they're done they have a full puzzle."

Having been at the school as a student when they just started using computers, to leaving the school as a teacher when the whole classroom has laptops, Fischer sees the coming years of education in her hometown as a slightly different version of the fundamentals.

"I think that the future will just be similar to what it is now, kids learning and teachers teaching."