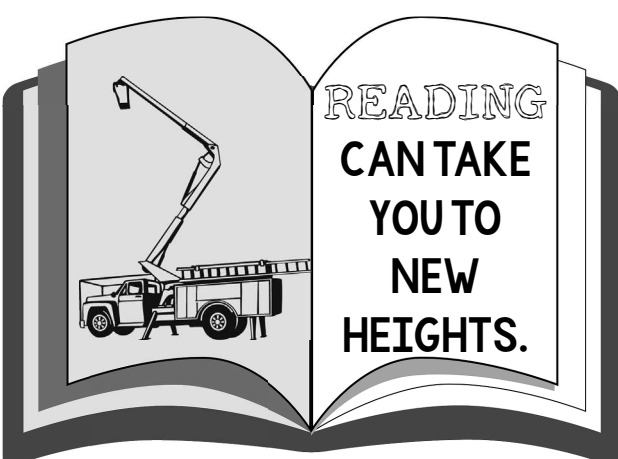


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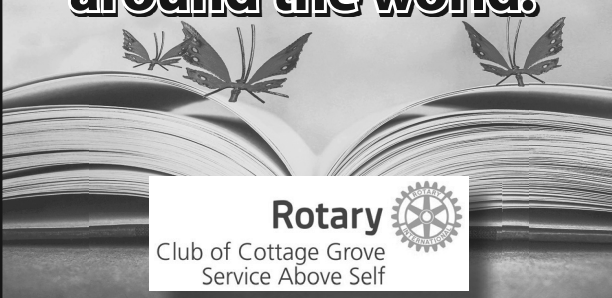
SENTINEL ARCHIVE PHOTO

The archway welcoming people to downtown is among many projects with EBID's fingerprint on them.

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among the group's existing and potential projects.

Making a Case for Reauthorization

EBID's role as a fee assessor and collector needs to be authorized every five years by the Cottage Grove City Council, a status which is coming up for renewal this September, but internal membership must vote to put it before council as well.

"So there's two things going on," said Linoz. "The goal is, as we're educating the membership and we're getting to the end of that fifth year, there's going to be a renewal asked to the city council. And we're hoping, with this reorganization and any changes to the fees, that we will be able to accomplish that and benefit the two tiers."

Reauthorization is also necessary to keep Downtown Cottage Grove operating as a unified organization.

"If everybody remonstrates, we end up with

[nothing]," Linoz said. "So it'll just dissolve."

Linoz also noted that the impact of the district dissolving would ripple through the community.

"If it goes away, it impacts several key organizations in the community who utilize EBID's pass-through for grants," she said. "And so right away, it's going to affect the Bohemian Foundation, it's going to affect Art Walk, it's going to affect Rotary. ... And there's other small groups that when they see an opportunity for a big grant, they can't handle it. They have to have another organization apply for them. They're going to lose out on us being able to do that."

Realizing that significant community buy-in would be needed to keep Downtown Cottage Grove alive, the group elected to place Councilor Jon Stinnett in the program administrator seat, relying on his years of community networking to gather momentum for the organization's next steps.

"I chose to take the job because I think I'm the right person for it," said Stinnett. "And it's not necessarily because I have the best ideas or the best answers, but I think together we can we can come up with those solutions as a community."

Stinnett, who also

served as editor of *The Sentinel* for several years, noted that his motivation to take the program administrator job dovetails with his other roles in the community.

"I became interested in running for city council for the same reasons, basically as a connector and someone who I think has a valuable perspective as a father and as someone who's studied this community as a journalist and been involved with a great many ways," he said.

As program administrator, Stinnett is tasked with networking and communicating with the business community, maintaining the organization's operations with the Main Street program and guiding the reauthorization campaign.

"My first and primary goal at this stage is to reach out to the business community and to make sure that we're still being helpful as an asset and a resource to the business community to get a recommendation to reauthorize for five years with the City of Cottage Grove," he said.

Other responsibilities include continuing a grant application process to try to fund a full-time executive director position, producing a staff feasibility report and overseeing events and promotions.



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The program administrator role itself is temporary, though Stinnett signaled that he would be interested in working with the organization in a long-term capacity if the city council reauthorizes the district.

Stinnett's seat on the city council does, however, position him in a conflict of interest on the matter. Furthermore, he is a representative of Ward 2, which includes a significant portion of the organization's fee district.

"I'm planning to recuse from proceedings that affect the organization directly. Most notably, of course, the debate around reauthorization," he said. "I think when the conflict is there, or when it seems potentially there, you have to state that and then be ready to remove yourself from that discussion. So, I plan to do that. ... And I think my perspective I gained in the position can only help me be a better public servant."

The intersection of roles is not unique to the Cottage Grove City Council.

Councilor Mike Fleck, for example, manages the nonprofit Community Sharing as executive director and has at times recused himself from matters before the council.

Because the success of a Downtown Cottage Grove project is dependent on fee revenue which remains optional to those within the jurisdiction, the nonprofit is aiming to get across the message that it's a worthy investment.

"You, as a business owner, benefit when your community is inviting, feels safe, and is bringing in tourists or it's keeping people in town who are shopping in town or doing business in town," said Linoz.

Relying instead on city tax dollars for economic and business improvements, Linoz argued, puts these improvements in competition with other items in a city budget and may not feel like a fair use of tax dollars from the perspective of other residents.

A specialized district, on the other hand, is able to focus efforts and extract fees only from those who will benefit most directly.

Stinnett echoed the idea that the organization can provide broader gains.

"A thriving downtown and commercial core benefits the entire community," he said. "And it gives us focus — an identity and an anchor — and an opportunity to excel as a community. So, we're not just about downtown — even though the name would suggest that — we are very much attending to the heart of the community."