

**DEADLINES****NEWS DEADLINES**

For inclusion in the Wednesday edition of the *Itemizer-Observer*:

**Social news** (weddings, engagements, anniversaries, births, milestones) — 5 p.m. on Thursday.

**Community events** — Noon on Friday for both the Community Notebook and Community Calendar.

**Letters to the editor** — 10 a.m. on Monday.

**Obituaries** — 4 p.m. on Monday.

**ADVERTISING DEADLINES**

**Retail display ads** — 3 p.m. Friday.

**Classified display ads** — 11 a.m. on Monday.

**Classified line ads** — Noon on Monday. Classified ads are updated daily on [www.polkio.com](http://www.polkio.com).

**Public notices** — Noon on Friday.

**CORRECTIONS**

The *Polk County Itemizer-Observer* is committed to publishing accurate news, feature and sports reports. If you see anything that requires a correction or clarification, call the newsroom at 503-623-2373 or send an e-mail to [kholland@polkio.com](mailto:kholland@polkio.com).

**WEBSITE**

The *Polk County Itemizer-Observer* website, [www.polkio.com](http://www.polkio.com), is updated each week by Wednesday afternoon. There, you will find nearly every story that appears in the print version of the newspaper, as well as some items, including additional photos, that do not appear in print due to space limitations.

**WEATHER**

RECORDED	HIGH	LOW	RAIN
Jan. 13.....	52	31	.00
Jan. 14.....	49	20	.00
Jan. 15.....	52	28	.61
Jan. 16.....	55	39	.07
Jan. 17.....	60	40	1.76
Jan. 18.....	59	47	.28
Jan. 19.....	56	42	.03
Rainfall during Jan. — 3.17 in.			
Rain through Jan. 19 — 3.17 in.			



Building owner Florin Drutu (left) works with Christina Nora Garza of Sherman Williams in Portland, deciding which colors to paint the tower and accents on the Cooper Block.

## Building renovation work downtown taking shape

*Cooper Block in Independence bustling with activity*

By Emily Mentzer  
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — The Cooper Block is coming alive, with restored storefronts on both Main and C streets, and framing for offices and apartments complete upstairs.

Already the smell of rotted wood has left the building, which has been opened up. Dry rot has been removed and damaged floor joists have been replaced. New beams were constructed in the basement, raising the floor — and roof — four inches.

"That's how much sag this building had," said developer Bodie Bemrose.

The building will be as close as possible to the original 1895 structure, down to the vents below the towering windows to allow it to breathe, he said.

"This building won't rot

out again," Bemrose said.

The renovated structure will house three retail places on the ground floor, including a restaurant.

The main entrance on C Street was opened back up and the staircase was rebuilt to original standards, replacing attempts by the previous owner at a giant spiral staircase.

Upstairs to the right will be three offices, able to be leased individually or as a group, catering to small business, Bemrose said.

To the left will be apartments, ranging in size from studio to one bedroom. Much of the space upstairs has been claimed, with leasing deals in the final stages, Bemrose said.

However, he is still seeking tenants for the spaces downstairs: two retail spaces and the restaurant.

"We didn't veer too much

from the original layout," Bemrose said. "We're pretty close to original."

Much work has been accomplished on the old building, which needed renovating from the floor joists to the roof, but much still remains.

Painting, electrical work and some ceilings and walls need to be added to the spaces before it's move-in ready.

Building owner Florin Drutu chose color schemes for the exterior on Thursday, and will do the painting himself.

The third floor, where the tower can be accessed, will be kept by Drutu for personal use and not leased out.

Bemrose said he expects to have an open house when the building is completed before renters move in, and hasn't given a firm deadline for project completion.

## City, co-op water dispute heats up

By Jolene Guzman  
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — The Falls City City Council has increased the rates it will charge Luckiamute Domestic Water Cooperative in hopes of spurring further negotiations on a contract to sell water to the utility.

In September 2014, a long-term water sales agreement between the city and cooperative was ruled invalid by a Polk County judge, the outcome of a lawsuit the city pursued to dissolve the contract.

At issue originally was the length of the contract — 20 years — and a handwritten change made after the contract was approved by both the city council and LDWC board in 2003. The change, approved by Falls City's mayor and LDWC's board president at the time, altered how the city could calculate rate increases.

In September, Polk County Circuit Court Judge Sally Avera ruled the mayor didn't have the authority to make the change, and therefore the contract is invalid.

Negotiations on a revised contract ended with the LDWC board voting it down and the cooperative has filed an appeal on Avera's ruling.

In the meantime, the city has been selling water to the cooperative at the original contract price of \$1.05 per 1,000 gallons, a low rate from the city's perspective. Without an agreement, Mayor Terry Ungricht suggested the city treat LDWC like any other customer.

"Not that I've given up on trying to have them as a bulk-rate customer, but in absence of an agreement, I think we need to set rates for them," he said at the council's Jan. 8 meeting.

His suggestion was to charge "outside city limits residential" rates for the co-



operative's two meters. The rate for the smaller meter would be \$111.70 per month on and \$157.06 for a second, larger meter. Those charges would be the base rate for 5,000 gallons on each meter. Any amount of water more than the base would be charged at a rate of \$2.84 per 1,000 gallons. The new rates go into effect at the end of January.

Ungricht said his intent with the rate change is to encourage LDWC to negotiate a bulk rate.

Bob Young, the former LDWC manager, said the original sales agreement was a benefit to both the city and the cooperative. With all its wells in Buena Vista, LDWC was looking for a source of water to improve pressure and volume to customers in the Falls City area. In turn, Falls City was looking to make money selling water.

Young agreed the rates should be higher, but encouraged the city to work out a new agreement.

"I want them as a bulk rate customer," Ungricht said. "But we can't keep subsidizing their system. I've offered them to put something on the table that we can look at .... I haven't received anything."

Ungricht said Thursday no negotiations have been set since the city informed LDWC of the rate change.

"We are open to meeting at any time," Ungricht said. "We want to sell them water through (the) rates we have now or a special bulk rate agreement."

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