



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Construction site superintendent Bill Schmidt looks over the lot on Tuesday, April 27, 2021, for the forthcoming Dollar General in Elgin. Construction began this week, starting with excavation that uncovered water mere feet from the surface

Dollar General breaks ground in Elgin

By ALEX WITTEWTER
The Observer

ELGIN — Elgin is joining the ranks of Eastern Oregon communities with a Dollar General.

Construction began this week along the Wallowa Lake Highway near the edge of the small town to build a new store covering more than 9,000 square feet. Response to the construction has been mixed. Some saw it as a boon to local business. A few locals saw it as a way to give residents access to a convenient way to stock up on cheap household goods without making a trip to La Grande. Others saw immediate issues with the construction.

“The more stores, the better,” said Teresa Martin, owner of All For You Salon & More. “People don’t stop for just one store on their way to Wallowa Lake. They have all those little stores because there’s so many things to look at — if there’s only one or two things you just keep driving.”

Arie Rysdam, whose family once owned the property where the franchise is going up, said that lot sits above marshland that is unsuitable for building. The family sold the land years prior, but it had been in the family before then since the 1910s.

“I told them from the start it was wrong,” Rysdam said. “It’s a wetland, and you got springs.”

After one day of digging, it seems Rysdam might be right. The construction site found



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

A sign on Tuesday, April 27, 2021, along the fencing at the lot in Elgin advertises the construction of a Dollar General in the Northeast Oregon town.

water seeping through the soil after digging just a few feet below ground level.

The site had once been nearly 30 feet lower than where it stands today, Rysdam said, and filled in decades ago, burying a barn and old cars. Rysdam said he believed the artifacts remain underneath the lot.

The Hatch Group Inc., a California-based construction company, is handling the building project, and the difficulties of the site do not faze Bill Schmidt, the company’s site superintendent. He said he is no stranger to opposition or challenges, having built hundreds of retail locations throughout the country.

“We’ll fill it in the morning,” Schmidt said.

Molli Angelos said the new construction will have a negative effect on her business, Leaning Haystack Produce and Retail, which grows food next door.

“I’m losing half my garden because of it. I’m disappointed to see Elgin bring this kind of store, when we have family businesses here that it will affect,” she said. “It’s a detriment to the community.”

Dollar General has 17,177 stores nationwide as of Jan. 29, according to the company’s latest annual report and proxy statement.

Construction began in January on a branch in Milton-Freewater, and the East Oregonian in December 2020 reported Uma-

tilla is on Dollar General’s list for consideration. And the EO in February reported Heppner residents opposed having one of the stores there.

The Dollar General would be the first of its kind in Elgin — a major franchise with new construction alongside buildings that have stood in the rural town for nearly a century.

Angelos, along with other local residents, took their concerns to the Elgin City Council and voiced their opposition to the construction, to no avail.

“A group of us tried, and went to the city, but because it’s commercial we had no voice,” Angelos said.

Dollar General stores have been thriving in small towns that would otherwise lack a grocery store. The Tennessee-based company, which has planned more than 1,000 new stores across the country, operates in a geographically niche market that targets Walmart stores normally operating in larger towns.

“The Dollar General people are under the impression that this store is going to be a pretty busy store,” Schmidt said, citing the major tourist attractions down the road at Joseph and Enterprise.

Locals also brought up another issue — the ability to find people to fill the new jobs. Martin said as a business owner, she is OK with Elgin getting a Dollar General.

“I wish there were more businesses coming in,” she said.

Trade pact gives U.S. beef, wheat a boost in Japan

By RICHARD SMITH
For the Capital Press

TOKYO — It still is too early to assess the total impact the U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement has had on Japan’s imports of U.S. beef and wheat.

Market watchers do see a positive impact from the trade deal, in effect since January of last year, but point out the COVID-19 pandemic has complicated matters.

Because of COVID-19, the past year would have been an especially bad time for U.S. beef to face a significant tariff disadvantage in its top export market, U.S. Meat Export Federation Japan director Takemichi Yamashoji said.

“So the U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement delivered important benefits for both Japanese consumers and the U.S. beef industry,” Yamashoji said.

Although the trade pact did remove the mark-up on U.S. wheat, the commodity only suffered a minimal loss of market share during the

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Orders for big-ticket manufactured goods rebound

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER
The Associated Press

Orders for big-ticket manufactured goods rebounded 0.5% in March as U.S. factories recovered from February weather disruptions. However, the recovery was not as strong as most had expected due to ongoing supply chain disruptions that continue to ensnare U.S. manufacturers.

It was the tenth time in the past 11 months that factory orders have increased with February being the exception, when orders declined 0.9% as severe winter storms raked much of the country.

Orders in a closely watched category that tracks business investment plans also rebounded, increasing 0.9% after having fallen 0.8% in February, the Commerce Department reported Monday.

Excluding the volatile transportation sector, orders would have risen 1.6% in March after having dropped 0.3% in February.

Orders in transportation fell 1.7% as a 5.5 advance in demand at auto plants was offset by a 46.9% plunge in orders for commercial aircraft, a sector that has been hit hard by plunge in air travel since the pandemic started a year ago. There have also been a string of cancellations for

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Bringing a version of Hollywood to Enterprise

Grady Rawls’ business produces videos ranging from weddings to advertisements

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Hollywood in Enterprise?

Well, not quite, but some of Grady Rawls’ work with Paper Street Enterprise might rival it.

Tucked in a basement studio under Sugar Time Bakery along North River Street, Rawls has computers, cameras and lenses of all types and pretty much anything he needs to create an audio/video production.

“We can take anything on now, but I cut my teeth on doing wedding cinema from 2008 to 2012 and that is a dynamic, live event, so we specialize in live events,” Rawls said. “For half the year, I’m filming hunting television. These are guys who have shows or have once-in-a-lifetime hunts and they want to have

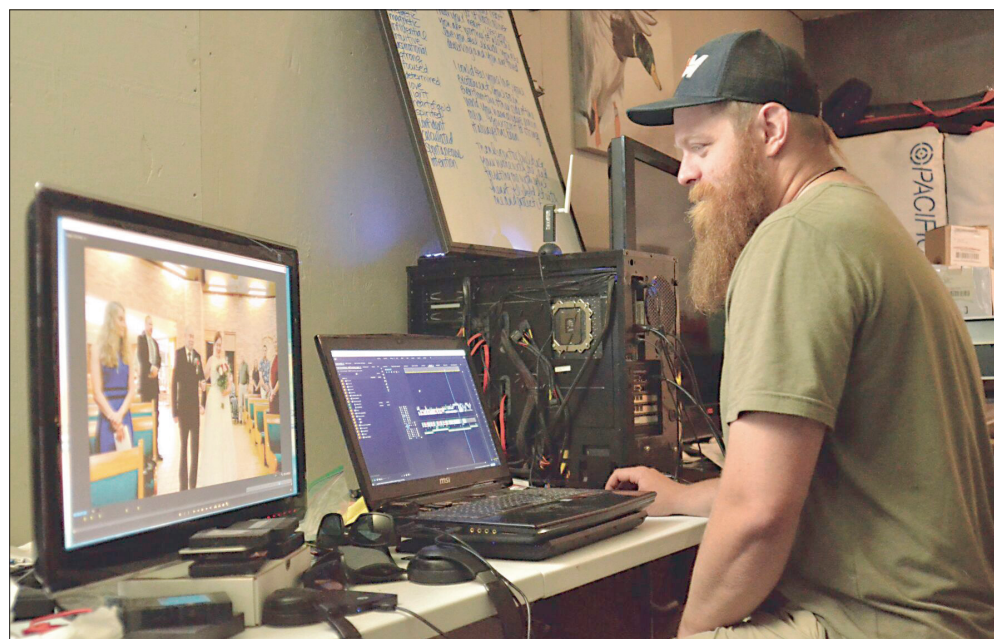
it filmed. Growing up here, I spent time in the mountains and now I get to — for the past 13 years — I get to follow people in the woods doing hunts and then producing films on that.”

Mostly a one-man operation, Rawls occasionally contracts with freelancers and farms out some of his editing work online to people around the world.

“I have a web of people we farm work out to. I can’t do all this on my own,” he said. “I can shoot it way faster than I can edit it, so we have people around the world who are helping do this.”

He’s also planning some expansion. He hopes to move his current studio to a location on Main Street, but he also is considering expansion beyond Enterprise.

“Here we are in Enter-



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Grady Rawls, owner of Paper Street Enterprise, edits one of the weddings he shot recently Thursday, April 22, 2021, in his studio in Enterprise.

prise, Oregon. I think I’ll have a Paper Street Boise, a Paper Street McCall, a Paper Street wherever,” he said.

Rawls said the name of his video company comes

— not surprisingly — from a movie.

“Paper Street Enterprise got its name from the movie ‘Fight Club,’ and those boys went down on Paper Street and had

a company called Paper Street Soap Co.,” he said. “How ‘Fight Club’ sat with me is, you’ve got a guy who says he became part of the system and ... he doesn’t have any happi-

ness but he’s going about all this stuff. He meets this counterpart who ends up being himself, if you’ve seen the flick, but ... he releases his mind; he gets to not worry about the world and starts to worry about living and happiness. ... I don’t agree with what those boys were up to, but it’s just the underlying details of it.”

While his company has branched out, one of Rawls’ specialties remains wedding videos.

“We still rely on weddings — I’ve shot over 100 weddings in my life and we do photo and video,” he said. “We specialize in what we call a same-day edit and that is where the film is shown at the reception. ... It’s a very niche thing, but it’s something where we get to show off our talent under super stress to blow everybody away about 10 o’clock at

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