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The Bulletin

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Luke Wirkkala adjusts to life outside



“I’m still trying to take it all in. I’m very easily overwhelmed these days.”

Luke Wirkkala was tried twice for murder on essentially the same facts, but with two different outcomes: Guilty in 2014 for the death of his houseguest David Andrew Ryder, 31, and not guilty April 5 after a retrial.

Hailey Hoffman/For The Bulletin

Luke Wirkkala, 40, was acquitted last month of murder in the death of David Andrew Ryder in Bend in 2013. He was incarcerated for eight years, at Snake River Correctional Institution in Ontario and the Deschutes County jail in Bend.

Onetime murder defendant adjusting after stunning change in fortune

BY GARRETT ANDREWS • The Bulletin

ASTORIA —

Luke Wirkkala was in only one fight in prison, sometime in early 2016, when he was two years into a life sentence for killing a man in Bend. He was attacked by his cellmate, a violent and unstable man who would sit on his bunk and laugh at nothing for hours.

One day, Wirkkala lost his patience and told the cellmate to keep quiet.

They fought viciously, exchanging wild swings and headbutts, crashing into the cell’s metal fixtures, until guards cracked open the door and sprayed both men with mace.

A coughing, blinded Wirkkala was marched to Snake River Correctional Institu-

tion’s bleak behavioral unit, where he would stay for 30 days.

After four days in isolation, he was given a shower. But the cold water reactivated the mace that had dried on his skin, searing his face, groin and other sensitive areas. It was some of the worst pain he had ever felt.

See **Wirkkala** / A8

HIGHWAY 97

Zoning restrictions hold back development

The much-feared fusion of Bend and Redmond is unlikely to occur due to strict zoning regulations, officials say

BY MICHAEL KOHN

The Bulletin

When Bend businessman Tony Aceti purchased a piece of farmland between Bend and Redmond 25 years ago, the area was still a rural patchwork of hay fields and juniper trees.

Today, Aceti’s land straddles Deschutes Junction, a busy intersection along U.S. Highway 97 where drivers speed past on their way to work and truckers race to their next destination. Aceti’s once peaceful location has been bisected by Tumalo Road.

The changes that have occurred on Aceti’s land are indicative of the developments along Highway 97 between Bend and Redmond.

The once-rural communities are booming with new housing developments, big box stores, and light industrial complexes. The road between them is starting to fill in with development.

“When I first moved to Bend the population was 10,000. The changes since then have been dramatic,” said Aceti, who in addition to farming and property development is also a creator of board games.

Aceti has been fighting to change the zoning designation of his property from Exclusive Farm Use to Rural Industrial for nearly two decades, following the recognition that development in the area since it was purchased no longer makes farming possible. Final approval to make the change has not been made by the county, however Aceti believes he is close.

He is not sure what might go there — a veterinary clinic, a tractor dealership, or a light industrial complex could be a good fit, he said. But growing hay is no longer possible given the soil quality and the triangular shape of the plot.

See **Zoning** / A9

OREGON POLITICS

After 100 days, time crunch looms larger in the Capitol

Spring cleaning, encores and the race for governor

BY GARY A. WARNER

Oregon Capitol Bureau

It’s a new month, but same headaches for Oregon’s Legislature.

The 2021 session of the Legislature hit the 100-day mark on Thursday. The constitution gives the House and Senate 160 days in even-numbered years to initiate, bloat and legislate before being forced to gavel the session closed.

When lawmakers return to the Capitol on Monday morning, they’ll have just 56 days left — no matter what. The Oregon constitution requires the Legislature to shut down by June 28.

In legislative parlance, the House and Senate must “Sine Die” — a Latin word twist that roughly translates to adjourn without a future date to meet in 2021.

See **Capitol** / A10

