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John Day fire hall construction to start soon

By Dave Fisher and Tim Trainor
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – With \$1.2 million in taxpayer dollars to work with, an amount approved by voters in the May 2014 primary election, the John Day city and rural fire protection departments are moving forward on their shared fire hall.

According to John Day city manager Peggy Gray, demolition, which occurred last week, will be followed by dirt and foundation work. The building's exterior is expected to start going up in late August, and the goal is to have the roof on and the walls buttoned up by the time winter arrives, said John Day Fire Department chief Ron Smith. Smith said the hall could be fully operational by February.

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Fire Hall facts

NOVEMBER BOND RESULTS

In John Day: 305 approved, 198 opposed
In John Day Rural Fire District: 242 approved, 180 opposed

Total cost: 1.8 million
Total raised by bond: About \$1.2 million
Cost to taxpayers: At the start of the 20 year bond, 61.5 cents per \$1,000 of property valuation, decreasing to about 42 cents per \$1,000.



An artist rendering of the new fire hall.

Contributed graphic



Crews demolished the building that was formerly El Cocinero Mexican Restaurant to make way for a new John Day Fire Station.

The Eagle
Cheryl Hoefler

JD looks to 'opt out' of Measure 91

County could do the same as elected officials mull their options

By Dave Fisher
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – If you were thinking of cashing in with the passage of Oregon's marijuana initiative, think again. You may have to set up shop somewhere else other than John Day and, perhaps, even Grant County.

By a 6 to 1 vote, the John Day City Council at its July 14 meeting decided to move ahead with plans to exercise its local option to draft an ordinance that prohibits the establishment of one or more of the following in the area of the city's jurisdiction:

- Marijuana processing sites,
- Medical marijuana dispensaries,
- Marijuana producers,
- Marijuana processors, and
- Marijuana wholesalers and/ or marijuana retailers.

The ordinance, if approved, would effectively negate most of the provisions of Measure 91, the marijuana initiative, approved by Oregon voters in the November 2014 election.

City Attorney Jeremy Green advised the city regarding HB 3400, signed into law by Gov. Kate Brown on June 30, which allows "qualifying" cities or counties to adopt an "opt out" ordinance in those localities in which no less than 55 percent of votes cast were in opposition to Measure 91.

The measure was soundly defeated in Grant County with almost 65 percent of voters opposed to the marijuana initiative.

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Derby drivers put on aggressive show

CRUNCH TIME



Whiskey Gulch demo derby still going strong

Story and photos by Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – Fans got what they came for last Saturday at the 26th annual Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby.

Aggressive drivers, 11 of them, had a bang-up good time too, putting on a show for the

crowd that packed the grandstands at the Grant County Fairgrounds.

Eric Johnson of Walla Walla, Wash., won the first-place prize of \$1,500, Jason Ward of Burns was second with \$1,000, and Tyler Nodine of John Day was third with \$500.

Besides winning third place,

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Cars collide during the derby Saturday.

An exciting moment in the first heat of the Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby had No. 338 Nick Dieter of Burns pushing No. 10 Wayne Saul of Mt. Vernon on the logs. Dieter won the heat with Saul in second place. Both came back for the main event and Dieter was awarded Most Aggressive Driver.

STUDENT ART



Lexi Helmick
Humbolt Elementary

Triangle Oil disputes DEQ findings

Between 1,000 and 5,000 gallons released, according to agency

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – After months of investigation and calling Triangle Oil a "possible responsible party," the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is now saying the John Day gas and oil distributor is responsible for the release of 1,000 to 5,000 gallons of "fresh" gasoline into the ground along the 400 to 600 block of South Canyon Boulevard.

"The estimate that I came up with was very rudimentary," said Bryn Thoms, DEQ's project manager. "We assume gasoline is a millimeter thick on the surface of the groundwater in an area that covers about two blocks."

When asked about what is meant by "fresh," Thoms said the groundwater, in speaking of just a few instances, smells like gasoline from the

pump at a gas station. Meanwhile, Triangle Oil, which has cooperated since the beginning when property owners first noticed noxious vapors emitting from their basements and crawl spaces, continues to conduct its own investigation under a unilateral order issued by DEQ, according to Brooks Foster of the Portland-based law firm Chenoweth Law Group, P.C., that now represents Triangle Oil.

"Triangle Oil's data suggests it is not responsible for the vapor issue on the west side of the highway," said Foster. "So far, our data suggests

we're not responsible for it, and it's an ongoing investigation."

Triangle Oil is located on the east side of Canyon Boulevard.

"Triangle Oil's data suggests it is not responsible for the vapor issue on the west side of the highway."

Brooks Foster
Chenoweth Law Group, P.C.

and cleanup."

That's, however, if Triangle Oil is the responsible party, an issue that remains unresolved, according to their attorney.

Meanwhile, DEQ is still waiting

for additional lab results and the investigation continues at Triangle Oil.

Thus far, all groundwater samples taken by DEQ down-gradient from Triangle Oil were contaminated.

"None up-gradient (samples) were contaminated. That's our main indicator," said Thoms. The other indicator, according to Thoms, is no other source has that capacity of gasoline, noting they found nothing at Ed Staub and Sons Petroleum to the south.

For his part, Russ Young, president and owner of the company, empathizes with those inconvenienced in any way.

"As a small, close-knit community, we are all affected by this situation. Triangle Oil, Inc., is committed to determining whether the recent gasoline odors along South Canyon are in any way related to its bulk plant facility," Young told the Eagle in an earlier statement.

