



The Eagle/Rylan Boggs

John Day Mayor Ron Lundbom makes a point during a Tuesday, June 13, city council meeting.

Improvement projects in John Day moving forward

By Rylan Boggs
Blue Mountain Eagle

A number of improvement projects are underway in John Day, including a new concert hall, improved sidewalks and potential urban renewal district in the downtown area.

However, the Weaver Complex, at 131 W. Main St., may require more restoration than anticipated.

Following the award of a \$100,000 grant to the city for the purchase of the Weaver Complex, inspections show it is actually four buildings sharing one roof. The structure has issues, including failing electric systems and a number of voids in the wall that pose a fire hazard.

John Day City Manager Nick Green said he would only advise the city council to purchase the building for the amount of the grant plus an estimated \$6,000 in closing costs. If this were to take place, the city would become the landlord of a building in need of considerable work.

Green described the building as "highly dangerous" and a "playground for fire." Fire Marshall Dave Fields said, if a fire were to start in the building, the whole block could be lost.

Despite being awarded the grant, the city is not obligated to purchase the building. The grant will expire in May of 2018, and the city would lose the funding.

No decision was reached during the Tuesday, June 13, city council meeting. Mayor Ron Lundbom said he would like to have an architect inspect the building. The issue will be revisited during the July 11 city council meeting.

Sidewalks

The city has decided to move forward on a project to install a sidewalk on the west side of Canyon Boulevard between Grant Union High School and Sixth Avenue.

The selected project will cost just under \$1.34 million and feature a 6-inch offset curb and a 13.5-inch wide swale between the curb and sidewalk for draining water.

This option is the most appealing of the four options ODOT developed following a July 2016 agreement with the city, according to Green.

After settling a \$23 million lawsuit brought against ODOT for not complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the price of the project increased substantially.

The project was originally estimated to cost \$840,000, according to Green.

The city applied for and received a Small Cities Allot-

ment grant of \$50,000, which will cover the majority of the city's 10 percent matching cost for the project.

Urban renewal district

During the meeting, the city council gave Green permission to look further into creating an urban renewal district in the downtown area.

An urban renewal district is a geographical area in which property tax rates are frozen, and any increase in property taxes from increased property values goes into a fund allocated for improvement projects for the area. Green said the technique has been effective in Pendleton, which has raised over \$1 million so far. Green described it as a "long-term investment vehicle" and said the money could be used as matching funds for future grants.

The idea is still in its initial stages.

"We would probably define it to include our entire general commercial and downtown districts," Green said. "Primarily Highway 26 and portions of (Highway) 395 but in some areas it would go one or two blocks into the city."

Green said the district would be a countermeasure against economic decline and could benefit business by allowing the city to invest tax revenue into downtown infrastructure. This would free up revenue for businesses to strengthen themselves and expand.

New offices and concert hall

The old Blue Mountain Junior High School building on Bridge Street is being renovated as office space and a concert auditorium by Blue Mountain Custom Homes. The business is hoping to host 200-300 people for concerts this summer.

Councilman Gregg Haberly voiced approval for the project and said he was tired of hearing about people shooting down ideas.

The city council agreed to issue a special events permit for the summer concert series as a pilot program.

Jesse Madden of Blue Mountain Custom Homes said the concerts could start in early August, depending on musicians' availability. He said he wanted to do this because he thought it would be a great event for the community.

One concern brought up during the city council meeting was parking for the event. It was suggested both the fairgrounds and public pool had parking space that, if not in use at the time, might be used for an event at the former school.

Solar eclipse, Rainbows and country music

City leaders continue plans for influx

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Everything from trespassing concerns, fire safety, snakes, garbage and traffic congestion was discussed at the latest solar eclipse meeting, hosted by the Grant County Chamber of Commerce.

"We're in all-hands-on-deck mode," said chamber office manager Tammy Bremner.

The solar eclipse will occur on the morning of Aug. 21 with Grant County in the line of totality. She welcomed an audience of 36 on June 14 at the Canyon City Community Hall. Bremner said they are still planning for an unknown number of visitors, but it could range from 10,000 to 100,000.

John Day Police Chief Richard Gray said all the camping spots at the Industrial Park have been reserved — 125 RV and 58 tent sites. Also, almost 1,000 people are expected at the Grant County Fairgrounds, and 35 at the newly acquired Oregon Pine property near the old Hudspeth mill.

He noted the sites are likely to have multiple people staying in each spot. If there were three visitors at each camping spot, that would total 3,654 people — not to mention those staying at other camping sites and hotels. Gray said 50,000 campers are also expected in Mitchell.

One audience member expressed concern about trespassers. Grant County 911 dispatch manager Valerie Luttrell suggested taking photos of any trespassing vehicles and get the license plate number, instead of inundating 911 with calls.

"Don't call if it's not a dire emergency," Luttrell said. "That's going to help us out."

Bremner reminded people to be proactive by posting no trespassing signs. Gray added that those trying to avoid unwanted visitors should be



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Grant County Chamber office manager Tammy Bremner, right, speaks with Jeannette Sheridan after the June 16 solar eclipse meeting at Canyon City Community Hall.

careful not to block access for emergency medical services.

Rebekah Rand, Blue Mountain Hospital's ambulance director, reminded the group that much of the ambulance services are run by volunteers who have jobs and other commitments, but they are staffing extra ambulances.

A man in the audience asked about snakes and extra antivenin.

"It's an expensive medication," she said. "The hospital has additional on hand. Yes, we are stocking up on that."

JDPD Officer Andrew Martin said he used to work for the local pharmacy, and suggested people have an extra month of medication, if possible.

Bremner noted locals should have their pets' vaccinations up to date, as well as themselves, particularly measles and mumps.

John Day Fire Chief Ron Smith offered some common-sense fire safety tips: Clear grass that surrounds burn barrels, trim natural vegetation to under 3 inches, clean debris around homes and stairwells, clean rain gutters, stack firewood away from the house and don't burn past regulation hours.

"We've had a wet spring, and the grasses will be 3 to 4 feet tall," he said. "They will turn yellow, and they will burn."

For those who have welcomed visitors in their fields, dry grass should be mowed down to an inch high.

"If someone is in a vehicle with their motor running and AC on, it could start a fire," he said. "Dry grass an inch high is not a problem — three inches is a different scenario."

Bremner said, when visitors call, she suggests they plan to arrive early and stay late to free up the highways, which are expected to be congested. She said it will take a lot longer than five hours to travel from Portland to John Day.

Gray said the police department is looking for reserves to assist with the influx of visitors. A Monument resident asked what they can expect for help from law enforcement — the town is over 60 miles away from the sheriff's office. Gray said Under-sheriff Zach Mobley is working on that.

Before the arrival of the eclipse, the Rainbow Gathering is expected to draw 10,000-30,000 people to the Malheur National Forest in Grant County from late June through early July. Gray said many from the group are expected to stick around for the eclipse.

"We're expecting that," he said.

He mentioned another event in Paulina could draw up

to 7,000 people.

The Lazy Rockin' Stirrup Ranch (LRS) Music Fest headliners include Jeff Foxworthy and Larry the Cable Guy and Diamond Rio, along with several country music artists.

"A little bit of patience with us will go a long way," Gray said.

Some are concerned with the amount of garbage that may be left in the wake of the hordes of people traveling through and staying in Grant County towns.

Kathy Mosteit of Granite, who owns The Outback restaurant and store, said she's worried about the amount of litter that they may have to deal with.

The town has 26 residents in city limits, and 12 on the outskirts with tourists who return to camp each year.

"We are on a scenic byway, and we're going to have campers everywhere," she said. "We have no garbage service, and we are starting to get concerned. We're in the forest, and everything is pack it in, pack it out — I think our forests are going to be a mess."

Bremner stayed behind to chat with Mosteit about ideas. Bremner said the chamber is still looking for volunteers to help with the SOLV cleanup and other tasks. For more information, call the chamber at 541-575-0547.

BRIEFLY

Mt. Vernon now accepting council applicants

The city of Mt. Vernon is accepting applications for a vacant position on the city council until 4 p.m. July 10.

The applicant must be at least 18, a registered voter and a resident of Mt. Vernon for at least one year.

Applications are available at Mt. Vernon City Hall from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays.

Highway construction projects planned

Nearly three dozen key highway construction projects are planned to be worked on in Eastern Oregon this summer, according to an Oregon Department of Transportation press release.

Some are now complete, and others are underway, or scheduled to begin later this year.

Eastern Oregon travelers are reminded to watch for orange traffic cones and construction workers along Interstate 84, U.S. 20, 26, 395, 95 and numerous secondary state

highways. Pay extra attention and be prepared for equipment, flaggers and traffic pattern changes when you see orange on the highway. Distracted or inattentive driving and speed are primary causes of crashes, so slow down and put cell-phones and other distractions away while behind the wheel. ODOT encourages safe travel to ensure everyone makes it home.

This year ODOT crews and their contractors will repair and resurface hundreds of miles of pavement, repair or replace aging bridges and culverts, and perform other work necessary to keep highways safe and efficient.

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Thank You

The family of Joyce Dowdy wishes to express our appreciation for the kindness and loving care that was given to Joyce.

We send a special thanks to the staff at the Blue Mountain Care Center, Blue Mountain Hospice Team and her many doctors and nurses. We thank all those who visited, sent cards, flowers and called.

There will be a "Memories of Joyce" potluck at the Grant County Senior Center on June 24th at 11 AM. We all hope you can join us.

Sincerely,

Ron Dowdy,

Lloydene & Bill Thomas

Lenny & Sherri Dowdy

Lewis & Lynette Dowdy

05791

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New Patients Welcome!
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VACANT COUNCIL POSITION

The city of Mt. Vernon has a vacant position on the Council.

The Council is accepting applications to fill this vacancy until July 10, 2017 at 4:00 p.m.

The term of this vacancy ends December 31, 2020.

The applicant must be at least 18 years of age, a registered voter and citizen of Mt. Vernon for 1 year or more.

Applications are available at:
Mt. Vernon City Hall
Monday - Friday 7 a.m. - 4 p.m.

John Day Methodist Church
presents the movie *The Shack*,
based on the novel by
William Paul Young

June 27th, 2017 @
7:00pm
located at
126 NW Canton Street,
John Day, OR
This will be open
to the public.

For more information call
541-575-1326