

# Hazardous materials to be removed from Weaver Building

Asbestos was found throughout the structure

By Richard Hanners  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Hundreds and hundreds of pounds of asbestos removal may be needed at the Weaver Building on Main Street, City Manager Nick Green told city councilors at their June 12 meeting.

The city closed on the 12,000-square-foot complex of four connected buildings sharing one roof in November 2017 using a \$100,000 Main Street Revitalization Grant and began to line up a \$200,000 loan to complete Phase 1 renovation work.

That work would consist of interior demolition of the top floor, removal of hazardous materials, required structural reinforcement and constructing a fire separation between the first and second floors. The city expected that rental income from the four ground-

floor businesses would pay off that loan in 10 years, he said.

The goal is to develop a mixed-use property, with commercial businesses on the ground floor and six condominiums on the second floor. Pinnacle Architecture estimated the completed project could cost nearly \$2 million.

Green reported to the council that during an environmental evaluation, Paulsen Environmental Consulting of Vale had identified asbestos throughout the structure and lead in numerous locations.

He said he was working with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to obtain grant funding to hire an asbestos abatement contractor to remove the hazardous materials.

That could amount to stripping the building down to its timber frame, Green said, leaving a clean building that would attract outside investment. At that point, the city could consider putting the building back on the market.

The cost to the city would be a "small match" for the



Eagle file photo

The Weaver Building, which was purchased by the city of John Day, will require asbestos removal and fire safety improvements.

grant funding, Green said, which he said was well worth the expenditure because it would leave the city with new residences and a "clean, healthy" building. He also noted the public sector needed to step up and take on this project because the private sector would not.

Green also reported that during an inspection of the ground-floor unit once used

by the Naturally Yours store, city staff discovered an opening between the ceiling and the apartment above. Decades-old magazines, beer cans and other debris had fallen from the apartment.

Green said the hope was to put the ground-floor unit back on the market, but the city may now have to install adequate fire protection between the two floors before renting the unit.

In other city council news:

The council unanimously approved the 2018-2019 fiscal year budget. Appropriations and expenditures totaled \$11.5 million, which included \$1.4 million for the general fund, \$1.2 million for the water fund, \$1.5 million for the sewer fund and \$521,000 for the street fund.

The \$4.7 million for the IT fund included the \$1.8 million state legislative appropriation to improve broadband in Grant County and an anticipated \$2.9 million U.S. Department of Agriculture Community Connect grant not yet awarded.

The council unanimously approved applying for a 2018 Recreational Trails Program grant from the Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, which was primarily for recreational trail projects rather than utilitarian transportation-based projects.

The city will apply for \$180,000, with the city's 20 percent match bringing total funding for the project to \$240,000. The match can be cash or in-kind

labor, Green said.

The goal is to improve access to the John Day River within the city limits, including connecting Prospector Trail at the Seventh Street Complex to Innovation Gateway. Four miles of inter-connected paved and gravel paths, much of it ADA-accessible, would be developed.

Four trails are proposed — one along the river from the sports complex to Innovation Gateway, one looping up to Northwest Bridge Street and back down to the river, one north up Charolais Heights and Davis Creek to Northwest Valley View Drive and one along Canyon Creek to the Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site.

Plans call for a pedestrian bridge over the river west of Canton Street and gravel parking lots near the pedestrian bridge and on Northwest Valley View Drive.

Consultants will present results from a wastewater treatment plant feasibility study at the council's June 26 meeting.

# Foreclosure auctions considered a success

Natural resource adviser may be provided by OSU Extension

By Richard Hanners  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County earned about \$168,000 from an open auction held May 17 to sell tax-foreclosed properties and about \$155,000 on a silent auction with bids opening June 15 for the remaining properties.

Thirty-one tax-foreclosed properties were deemed to the county April 10, and 13 of the properties offered at the open auction did not have buyers. The minimum bid at the open auction was set at 50 percent of market value.

Grant County Assessor David Thunell told the Grant County Court at their June 13 meeting that 58 bids were submitted for the properties that didn't sell at the first auction. One property in Kimberly had 13 bids, he said.

The court approved Thunell's suggestion to accept the top two bids in the silent auction. If neither bidder presented a check on June 15, the county would hold onto the properties for now.

Checks for 12 of the 13 remaining properties were submitted, and the second bid for the 13th property was a good offer, Thunell told the Eagle.



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Ochocho National Forest Supervisor Shane Jeffries updates the Grant County Court on upcoming projects during their June 13 meeting.

All the sold properties will be on the tax rolls by July 1, he said.

Thunell told the court delinquent taxes on some properties dated back to the 1980s, and he was glad to see them back on the tax rolls. He credited District Attorney Jim Carpenter for fulfilling his campaign promise to file for judgment on properties that owed back taxes.

County Judge Scott Myers said the earnings would be used to reimburse the various county departments that worked on the foreclosures.

In other county court news: The court approved changes to the draft fiscal year 2018-2019 budget. The general fund totals \$5.1 million,

Grant County Treasurer Julie Ellison told the Eagle.

Included in the changes was \$40,000 budgeted for a new natural resource adviser position. Myers said he was in talks with Oregon State University to provide someone to fill that position through the extension service, with the costs shared between the county and the university.

Following an executive session, the court agreed to offer to sell the county health department building at 528 E. Main St. in John Day to Community Counseling Solutions for \$400,000 and to retain the "L" Building next door at 530 E. Main St. for use by the county.

The vote was 2-1, with Commissioner Boyd Britton opposed. The "L" Building is currently occupied by the Economic Development Office, Veteran Services Office, Emergency Management and the food bank.

New Ochocho National Forest Supervisor Shane Jeffries introduced himself to the court and provided an update on the forest. Jeffries previously worked as a deputy supervisor and district ranger in the Deschutes National Forest.

The Ochocho Forest manages about 740,000 acres, including 57,826 in Grant County. About half of the Black Canyon Wilderness is in Grant County, with access at the South Fork John Day trailhead. Volunteer and For-

est Service crews will clear hiking trails in the wilderness this summer, Jeffries said.

About 230,000 acres of the forest is included in the proposed Blue Mountains Forest Resiliency Project planned for the Ochoco, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests, Jeffries said.

The Ochoco Forest is working with the South Fork John Day Watershed Council,

Bureau of Land Management and Rockpile Ranch to conduct a restoration assessment for about 15 miles of Wind Creek, Jeffries said.

A draft environmental impact statement on the management of wild horses that wander from Big Summit Territory in the Ochoco forest to the Murderers Creek area in the Malheur forest is planned for release this sum-

mer, Jeffries said. Currently there are more horses than the environment can support, and reproduction is faster than mortality, he said.

The court tabled a request by Grant County Clerk Brenda Percy for a stipend to compensate her for handling payroll. Myers initially motioned to deny Percy's request.

The court's next meeting will be June 27.

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