

City to consider rezoning Kam Wah Chung lots

Main Street parking space lines could be repainted

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The city took another step toward consolidating the lots around the Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site, as the John Day Planning Commission looked at rezoning the properties at their Sept. 11 meeting.

The state Parks and Recreation Department is considering acquiring the city park properties that include the Gleason Pool facility as part of a master plan to improve the historical Chinese landmark for increased tourism.

The department's rezoning request grew out of a variance request to allow a volunteer park host for the Kam Wah Chung site to park an RV on site during the tourist season.

City Manager Nick Green



John Day City Manager Nick Green updates the city council about progress toward the city's economic development goals on Sept. 11.

said the lots owned by the state, as well as the city lots the state wants to acquire, are zoned general commercial and residential limited. Both zoning districts prohibit people from living in RVs outside of a mobile park.

Instead of a variance, he suggested rezoning all the lots as park reserve, the same

as the Grant County Fairgrounds. The rezoning would also conform with the Parks and Recreation Department's plans for the Kam Wah Chung site.

Chris Labhart, a volunteer at the historic site, noted that once the properties are zoned park reserve RV parking could be allowed as a conditional



John Day Mayor Ron Lundbom

use. Currently the volunteer hosts park their RVs at Clyde Holliday State Park, but they would be willing to stay longer if they could park close to the Kam Wah Chung site.

Green laid out a timeline for the rezoning process. The planning commission will see the request at their Oct. 23 meeting along with the city's annexation request for the former Oregon Pine mill site and a property recently acquired from the Hills, he said.

At the city council meeting following the planning commission meeting, Sherrie Rininger, owner of the down-

town store "etc.," asked the city to consider repainting the yellow and white lines on curbs along Main Street to control parking.

Councilor Dave Holland explained that the city stopped repainting the lines a number of years ago because of cost.

Rininger said large vehicles were not just taking up more than one parking space but blocking views of her building from passing vehicles. She said she spoke to Public Works Director Monte Legg about the matter, and he told her people don't obey parking space lines.

Councilor Shannon Adair, a part owner of the 1188 Brewing pub and restaurant on Main Street, said oversized vehicles parking downtown was a common problem and she supported Rininger. Adair noted that she and Rininger have talked about forming a downtown merchants association, which would discuss various downtown issues including parking.

Mayor Ron Lundbom noted he's seen pickups with long trailers parked in front of Len's Drug taking up several spaces.

Councilor Brandon Smith, however, wanted to know where oversized vehicles could park in the downtown area.

Green said he would see about getting the lines repainted, but any effort to change parking regulations might take more time.

Green also updated the council on talks with the state Department of Environmental Quality about a brownfield grant that could be used for asbestos abatement at the downtown Weaver Building.

The city purchased the building in 2017 after discussions with downtown merchants in order to see it restored as a mixed-use building with commercial businesses on the ground floor and residential units on the second floor.

If awarded the grant, the city could strip the upper floor down to structural framing, which would make it a more attractive investment property, Green said. The city could then put the property on the market.

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