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GRANTS WILL ASSESS, REPAIR GRANT COUNTY SCHOOLS



Prairie City School students enjoy lunch on Tuesday in the cafeteria, which will be upgraded with a \$2.5 million seismic grant. Eagle photos/Angel Carpenter

Four schools receive assistance, including \$2.5M for Prairie City

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Four Grant County schools were recently awarded Technical Assistance Program grants from Oregon Department of Education's Office of School Facilities. Three of the grants assess deferred maintenance issues for school buildings and a fourth determines if seismic upgrades are needed.

Prairie City, Monument, Grant and Dayville school districts received word on March 14 they'd received the TAP grants.

Prairie City School District was also recently awarded a \$2.5 million grant from the state's Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program.

Monument School District

Monument received three TAP grants, including a Facilities Assessment grant

for \$20,000, which addresses the current physical condition of the buildings and determines needed renovations; a Long-Range Facility Plan grant for \$25,000 to prepare for the future; and a Seismic Assessment grant for \$25,000 to determine the condition of district buildings to withstand a significant earthquake.

A fourth TAP grant is also available, called the Environmental Hazard Assessment, which checks school buildings for mold, radon and asbestos.

School districts can apply for matching grants through the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program in order to complete the work recommended by professionals for the long-range, facilities and environmental hazard assessments.

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Prairie City fifth- and sixth-graders learn Mexican folk dances Tuesday in the school gym, which will be upgraded with a \$2.5 million grant.

"THESE GRANTS GIVE US THE OPPORTUNITIES TO HAVE PROFESSIONALS COME IN AND DEVELOP A SOUND PLAN AND FOR US TO BUDGET FOR THE NEAR FUTURE AND THE LONG TERM."

Superintendent/Principal Casey Hallgarth, Prairie City School District



The Eagle/Richard Hanners
A state grant will help Len's Drug upgrade its storefront on Main Street.

Expanding on Main Street

Grant award will support Len's Drug remodel

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

One of downtown John Day's key businesses will see a facelift and expansion sooner than later, thanks to a major grant award from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Greg and Marla Armstrong were awarded a \$200,000 Main Street Revitalization grant through OPRD's Oregon Heritage division.

Thirty grants totaling \$5.2 million were awarded to Oregon Main Street Network organizations. The projects included facade improvements, housing projects and seismic upgrades, with grants ranging from \$56,731 to \$200,000.

The grant application was submitted by John Day on behalf of the Armstrongs after the city council approved their submission Feb. 26. The Armstrongs will provide \$448,000 for the \$648,000 project, which calls for increasing retail space by about 4,500 square feet.

The Corner Cup building, which the Armstrongs own, likely would be removed as the store expands west. The drug and variety store has expanded into adjacent spaces since 1977, which created unusable areas that will be turned into uniform retail space during the remodel.

The project also calls for improvements to the Main Street storefront with updated energy-efficient windows and insulated walls. Marla Armstrong told the Eagle she wasn't sure when the project would begin, as architects were still working on plans.

Like many small businesses, the Armstrongs saved up a little each year toward the project. The state grant would enable them to move forward more quickly, she said.

A grant application was also submitted for the 1188 Brewing Company, which completed a major interior remodel in 2018. They had requested \$90,860 with a \$23,500 match to create an integrated facade covering the original location and the company's expansion into adjacent space to the west.

John Day City Manager Nick Green had noted at the Feb. 26 council meeting that OPRD likely would limit awards to no more than \$200,000 per city.

Nine of the 30 projects that were awarded Main Street Revitalization grants offered matches over \$200,000. The largest match was \$635,300 from the city of Woodburn for a complete renovation of its city hall building. The second largest was \$525,000 for a major remodel of the Litch Building in Enterprise. Len's Drug's match was the third largest at \$448,000.

911 phone tax bill awaits fate in Revenue Committee

Legislation sponsored by Findley would provide more funding for dispatch centers

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

A bill that would double the existing 75 cent fee on phone bills to support 911 dispatch centers across the state has seen considerable support from law enforcement and emergency groups as well as urban and rural cities and counties.

House Bill 2449 is sponsored by Reps. Lynn Findley, R-Vale; John Lively, D-Springfield; Pam Marsh, D-Southern Jackson County; and Greg Smith, R-Uma-



Oregon Rep. Lynn Findley

tilla, Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman and Wasco counties.

The bill also would reduce administration fees collected by the Department of Revenue from 1 percent to 0.5 percent and collected by the Office of Emergency Management from 4 percent to 2 percent.

Rising costs

Supporters note that the phone tax hasn't increased in 24 years, which puts a strain on rural counties with small populations. In John Day, the minimum cost of staffing a 911 center year-round in 2015 was \$445,000, but the 911 tax provided \$248,982, leav-

ing the city, county and other taxing jurisdictions to come up with about \$196,000 to fund the dispatch center.

Grant County voters in November 2017 turned down a local option tax proposal intended to fill the funding gap by 1,503 to 1,194. The city of John Day then received a \$420,000 special appropriation from the state legislature to help cover the funding gap for the next biennium while the city looked for a long-term solution.

A 2018 intergovernmental agreement between the county, eight cities, one community and three rural fire districts established a new agency to operate 911 dispatch in Grant County under an Intergovernmental Council. The



The Eagle/Richard Hanners
The logo for the Grant County Emergency Communications Agency was created by Grant Union High School senior Avery Hughes for her senior project.

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