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Initiative would require meetings about moving Idaho border

'Greater Idaho' effort would put Grant County in Idaho

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

As more and more rural Oregonians grow frustrated with politics on the west side of the state, a separatist group that is seeking to move Oregon's border to create a "Greater Idaho" is collecting signatures to have the proposal on the ballot for November's general election in Grant County that would require the Grant County Court to meet to discuss joining Idaho.



Mike McCarter

County Clerk Brenda Percy said the petitioners must submit 231 valid signatures from active Grant County registered voters by Aug. 5.

The petition is about the "Greater Idaho" effort, a movement that advocates for the adjustment of the current state boundaries of Idaho, California and Oregon, thereby increasing the size of Idaho to encompass several rural counties that are in California and Oregon. Grant County is one of the 19 Oregon counties the group seeks to have moved into the jurisdiction of the state of Idaho.

The petition mandates the Grant County Court hold three meetings a year for the specific purpose of discussing the merit of promoting the relocation of the Idaho border to encompass Grant County within the state of Idaho.

Greater Idaho spokesman Mike McCarter said the movement's purpose is to preserve rural values.

"There is a distinct difference between rural and urban folk in Oregon," McCarter told the Eagle. "I am itching to get over to Grant County and talk to the people over there."

Although few people are collecting signatures in traditional ways because of social distancing, petitions can still be downloaded from greateridaho.org or picked up at certain locations.

McCarter said rural counties have been outraged by laws coming out of the Oregon Legislature that threaten rural values. He said rural voices are ignored because they are outnumbered.

"I have been called everything from 'knuckle-dragger' to 'old white man' in trying to move this forward," McCarter said.



Contributed image

A graphic of the proposed sawmill over the water gardens at the city of John Day's Innovation Gateway.

The next step for the Innovation Gateway

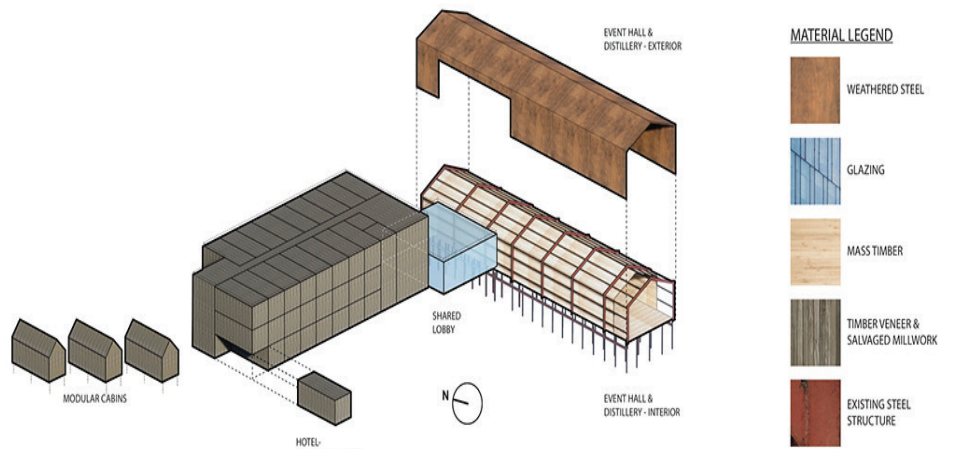
Plans include hotel, event center, water gardens, pavilion

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

A new hotel, an event center reusing the sawmill shed and a connecting lobby are some of the plans listed for the John Day Innovation Gateway project.

A report from landscape architecture firm Walker Macy details the plans centered on redeveloping the former Oregon Pine property on the west side of John Day and building while honoring the history of the sawmill. This is an important part of the Innovation Gateway because it is the first sight for many visitors coming into John Day, according to the report.

The proposed hotel is planned to be a three-story, 50-room building adjacent to the John Day River. The hotel plans to offer eight cabins clustered to the north, across the John Day River, set on ground screws to offer protection



Contributed image

The materials for construction of the proposed hotel and event center.

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The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

1188 Brewing Company Owner Shannon Adair, left, and head brewer John Spencer talk at the restaurant Friday.

Local business owner pushes for changes to small business aid

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Before the government resumed taking applications for the \$660 billion aid program for small businesses hit by the fallout of the coronavirus outbreak on Monday, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, hosted a conference call Friday with Oregon small business owners, including 1188 Brewing Company Owner Shannon Adair, to push for cash payments for small businesses to fill the gaps left by the Paycheck Protection Program.

Wyden in March introduced a

small business rescue package that provided cash payments through tax refunds, as well as a wage credit to help keep workers on payroll. The wage credit was included in the coronavirus relief package passed by the Senate on March 25, and Wyden is pushing for inclusion of cash payments in the next coronavirus relief package.

"Congress has to do more to promote the agenda of the smallest of the small businesses in the next coronavirus package," Wyden said. "Small

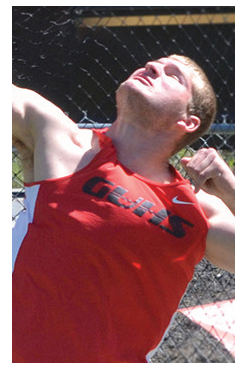
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Rilee Emmel



Sequoya Swearingen



Drew Lusco

A season cut short

Senior athletes reflect on the cancellation of spring sports

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

With OSAA's decision to cancel all remaining spring activities and sports to stem the spread of the coronavirus, local senior athletes are watching an exciting time of their life slip away and grappling with what it all means.

"It is what it is," Grant Union senior Drew Lusco said.

Lusco, who signed to play football with Eastern Oregon University, said he was looked forward to

playing a sport each season as he has since sixth grade.

The senior said his goal this year was to make it to the state championships in shot put or discus. Instead, he said he has been working for a local rancher to stay busy.

Lusco said he misses seeing his classmates everyday as well. The Grant Union valedictorian said he is looking forward to some type of graduation ceremony.

For Prairie City's Rilee Emmel, track and field, though not her primary sport, was a way for her to get out and enjoy some physical activity.

"I just liked being outside," Emmel said.

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