

John Day Farmers Market in full swing

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

The John Day Farmers Market is in full swing this summer, with two new local vendors joining the spaced-out, masked event Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Vendors and visitors alike took precautions to comply with the governor's COVID-19 restrictions July 4.

Manager Stephanie LeQuieu said the market is an excellent way for entrepreneurs looking for inexpensive retail space. The cost to rent a booth is \$10.

She said, while food vendors need to meet minimum federal and state guidelines, the city does not require them to have a business license.

Fruit vendor Austin Cates, a junior who had been looking for a job, and Roni Hickerson decided to sell cherries, plums and other fruit that grows on their property.

"We figured it would be a good way to get rid of our cherries, and (Cates) needed to get a job," Hickerson said.

Hickerson said it takes a couple of hours per night to pick cherries and plums on their property.

Vendors Natosha McLeod, Trista Cox and Katie Cox, otherwise known as "Stylin NTK," said they were a group of "bored moms" who decided to start selling their handmade jewelry, fresh eggs and car air fresheners at the farmers market this year.

McLeod said so far three of them have enjoyed the endeavor.

LeQuieu said, while it has been slower this year, people generally have an overall awareness of the value of buying food locally.

"A farmers market really brings your local artisans in one place," she said.



Eagle photos/Steven Mitchell
A mother with her baby purchases produce Saturday at the John Day Farmers Market. The market will be operating every Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. until Oct. 17.



Bundles of kale at the Harrison Ranch booth Saturday at the John Day Farmers Market.

Planning commission approves Dollar General site design

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Dollar General moved one step closer to beginning construction with the approval of their application from the John Day Planning Commission.

The planning commission reviewed the staff report, held a public hearing, asked questions and voted to give their recommendation to approve the application June 30.

The Zaremba group, on behalf of Dollar General, submitted the application to construct a 9,100-square foot store in front of Napa Auto Parts, across the highway, in between Timbers Bistro and the John Day Trailer Park, at 700 W. Main St.

The Type III site design review application states that the project will include one freestanding sign, parking and landscaping improvements with 36 parking spaces, including two ADA spaces, and a 36-foot-wide driveway with a new access approach to U.S. Highway 26.

Mary Ann Wervy, the senior vice president of retail development at Zaremba, said Zaremba is the preferred developer for Dollar General and has received approval from Dollar General to move forward with the store in John Day.

"We're doing our due diligence now with respect to soils and environmental," Wervy said. "You'll probably see somebody on the

site ... doing some testing for us, and we're here to seek approval and move into full construction drawing after we receive your approval."

Neale Ledgerwood from the planning commission asked what was going to be done on the entrance into the parking lot. City Manager Nick Green said what has been proposed is to deconstruct or decommission the entrance that is the closest to Timbers on the west end and relocate that so it's essentially across from the road that goes to JD Rents and Power Equipment.

The approach on the parcel between the John Day Trailer Park and the Dollar General will also move closer to the Dollar General by 10-15 feet.

Tim Unterwegner from the planning commission asked if they planned to fill in the ground to bring the site above the floodplain. Eric Ferguson, the Dollar General engineer, said they currently designed to have the finished floor 1.2 feet above the floodplain.

The commission voted to approve the site design review on the condition that Zaremba submit the landscaping plans, the outdoor lighting specifications, the floodplain development permit and Oregon Department of Transportation's approval for the traffic impact analysis.

Zaremba plans to submit these items with their final plans, which will be subject to review by planning staff.

Transient room tax discussion continues during chamber meeting

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant County Chamber of Commerce met June 18 and continued the conversation on the transient room tax with representatives from the city of John Day. The chamber also discussed relief for membership fees for those in need and a logo being developed that can be used by the county and city.

When the conversation began on the TRT, Chamber Manager Tammy Bremner shared during the meeting some of the details of the conversation she had with John Day City Manager Nick Green on May 27.

In the conversation, Green told Bremner that he was going to suggest to the city council that they implement a city TRT

in addition to the county's TRT that goes to the chamber — instead of implementing a city TRT tax in place of the county's, she said.

"He did come in to see me, and it didn't sound like we were going to meet again because he was going to recommend to you that the city have their own tax, and at that time he said he was going to suggest 4% because he didn't feel that 12% (the 8% county rate plus a new 4% city rate) would be too high for the entire county," Bremner said.

Bremner said Green told her she could share that plan with the chamber board.

"I was just going to inform the board that we will just continue the way we always had," Bremner said.

John Day Mayor Ron Lundbom and City Councilor Shan-

non Adair were both present at the chamber meeting on June 18 and said they were unaware of the details in the conversation between Green and Bremner but added that they anticipate having another work session on the TRT.

Lundbom said he would like the opportunity to continue the work session with the chamber because the focus can be on Ordinance No. 2012-04 since the previous meeting was focused on outdated information from an older ordinance.

"I would like to work together, and I like the logo happening here," Adair said.

"I thought that from the beginning that all of our, whether it's county, city, chamber, parks and rec, we should be working together to promote our area and the businesses need to be

involved in that (TRT) discussion too."

Adair said the city never intended to exclude the chamber from all of the TRT funding.

Bremner said it was one of the options presented during the previous work session. Adair said, while the option was presented, it did not mean it was discussed or agreed upon prior to the meeting and is not the direction the city wants to go.

Lundbom added that other taxes and ideas have been presented and recommended before for extra revenue but have also been turned down.

Representatives from the city and chamber agreed they were looking forward to an opportunity to meet again and work together. A date has not been assigned yet for the next work session.

Also at the meeting, chamber board member Scotta Callister shared her concern about members choosing to not renew their membership because of financial hardship from the COVID-19 pandemic. She suggested offering a discount or allowing members to pay what they can afford.

"I can live with that," Franklin said. "It gives them the opportunity to do what they want. If they want to pay the whole thing, they can, and if they don't or can't, they can contribute whatever they want."

The chamber voted to send a note with renewal bills, stating members can pay what they can afford. The project to develop a new Grant County logo is also moving forward.

"We've been working for months on creating a logo that

will be for Grant County and not just for the Chamber of Commerce, and we're hoping it will be usable and adaptable by all the individual communities for use in their promotional material," Callister said. "It'll reflect our values, communities and the spirit of Grant County."

Board member Didgette McCracken said the project is 75% completed.

Attributes and values determined by a survey were used in helping create the logo.

"I think this will be beneficial for the whole county because we will have a symbol that people can identify when they think of Grant County," Franklin said. "So if each individual community uses that symbol in their own way, at least it's going to be identifiable to the community as a whole."

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