

Revitalizing Main Street program

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

The John Day City Council voted to send a letter to local leaders to gain support for refunding a state program designed to help main streets in Oregon.

The Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant was designed to support downtown revitalization efforts in communities through rehabilitating and constructing buildings on properties in the downtown area, according to the program's document.

The program also helps facilitate a community revitalization that leads to private investment and job creation.

John Day City Manager Nick Green said, due to the economic impacts of COVID-19, the program was cut. However, the economic impact was not as severe as originally anticipated.

The letters sent to state Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, and state Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, urged their support for the reallocation of funding to the program.

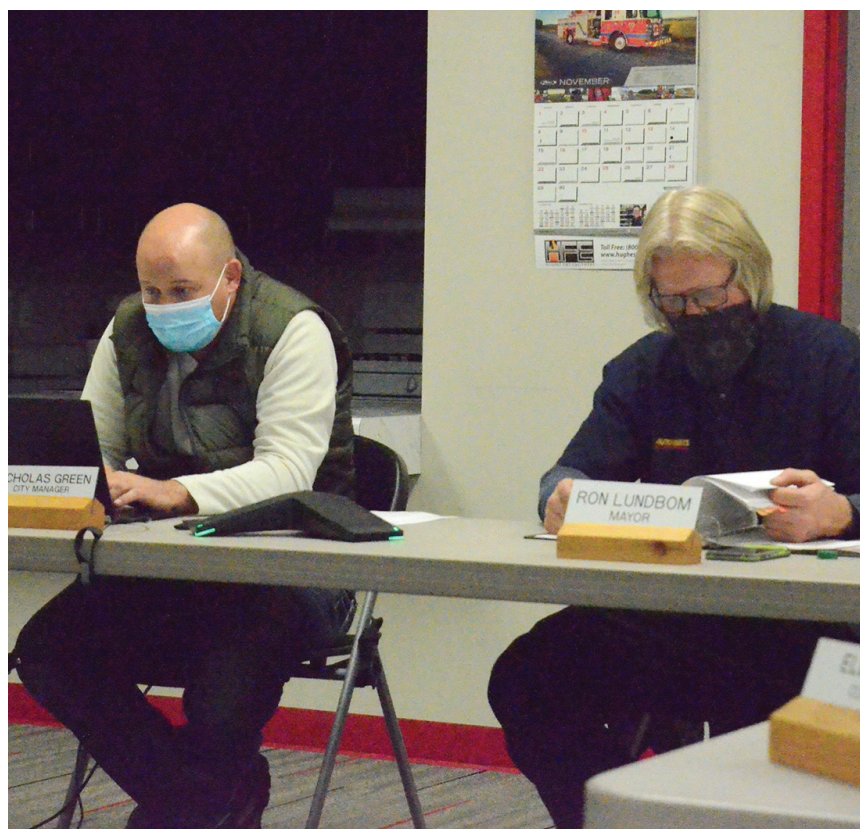
Green said the city won funds from the Main Street program two years in a row.

"I know there were a lot of people looking forward to putting a proposal together for the 2021 round, which, at present, no longer exists," Green said.

Green gave an update on several Main Street projects in John Day and financing.

The cost estimate to complete structural repairs on the planar shed on the Oregon Pine property is around \$325,000. This excludes the price of ADA restrooms and accessibility, minimal improvements on the roof and paint and installing new electrical wiring. Green said it could run the city about \$500,000 to \$700,000 to complete the project.

The United States Department of Agriculture invited the city to apply for their community facilities grant, which could help cover some of the cost, but the city would still be responsible to



John Day Mayor Ron Lundbom and City Manager Nick Green during the city council meeting on Nov. 10.

cover the match.

"In my mind, it's a question of how badly do we want to open that space for public use," Green said. "We need to cover about a third of the cost."

Councilor Dave Holland said he understands the shed is a part of the city's goal of providing community space, but wondered if it would be beneficial to wait on funding the project to make sure the hotel announced last year begins construction.

Green said the problem the new hotel faces is that they're not able to step up and give the city money because they can't find a builder who can do their project for the \$100,000 per room the hotel owners budgeted for.

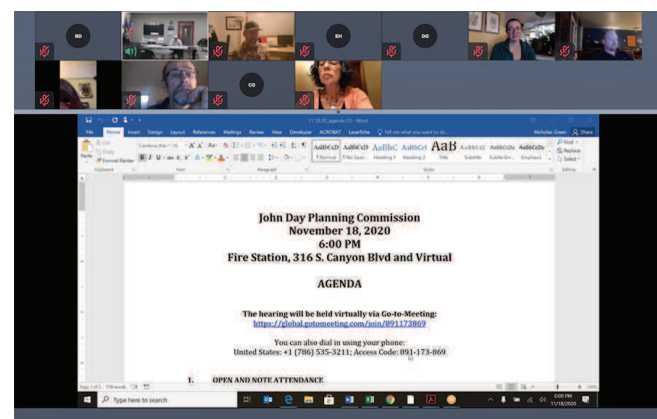
"If you were going to talk to some of the people doing commercial devel-

opment right now and where quotes are coming in, they're far higher than most of the budgetary cost estimates for this type of commercial work," Green said.

Green said people are balancing ultra-low interest rates against a high cost of construction. Grants could help offset the planar shed project, but Green said the best he could do is a 30-40% percent match.

Many council members agreed it would be better to postpone plans for the shed for now and re-evaluate again in the future.

On another project, Tyler Sheedy and his wife, Krista Qual, are in the process of refinancing the Weaver building on Main Street and have paid \$50,000 down on their \$125,000 original loan from the city, according to the meeting agenda.



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

The John Day planning commission met online and in-person on Nov. 18.

Conversation continues on manufactured homes in John Day

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Development codes for manufactured homes are getting an update in John Day, but several concerns were raised when discussing a proposed amendment.

John Day City Manager Nick Green said during the planning commission meeting on Nov. 18 that a general trend accelerated by COVID-19 sees people from major metropolitan areas now looking for suburban, rural and frontier communities.

"We've seen an increase in 1031 exchanges, and people are moving real estate dollars from developed areas to John Day ... and as you are aware, we've seen more commercial development applications in the last year than we've seen probably in the prior 20," Green said.

Last year, the city did a comprehensive plan update that included the city's housing market assessment, which identified a deficit in housing for higher- and lower-income people and for workers. Green said the city has to accommodate for additional housing to address the issue.

The city wants to ensure they can provide a mix of housing and that standards and code requirements are up to date. Green said the new requirements will apply to new developments and not to the existing parks unless there is a substantial change in expansion for a unit.

"The primary purposes of this amendment are to clarify the code language, establish consistency with state and federal codes, and to incorporate requirements that future developers pro-

vide basic standard-of-living amenities for residents," states the staff report for the amendment.

Kenneth Kataroff, an attorney from Schwabe, Williamson and Wyatt, representing Riverside Home Park, said while they don't have an issue with the amendment, they were concerned with several pieces such as the minimum floor plan size requirements and issues related to needed housing and clear and objective standards.

"Anytime we tighten the screw a little bit (new restrictions or code changes), it makes things more expensive and development a little more difficult," Kataroff said. "We just wanted to say that one of the ways to spur economic growth is to do it safely and correctly, yes, but to also be thoughtful about the amendment we put in place."

Patti Rathbone, an investor in Riverside, agreed and said growth is good, but people have to think about the residents who live at Riverside.

Liz Aleman from the planning commission had a concern regarding the minimum square footage for the play area for new manufactured homes. The staff report listed the minimum square footage at 2,500 square feet for a play area, but on the May 12 planning commission minutes, a minimum of 5,000 square feet was identified.

Aleman said it was a substantial reduction. She favored maintaining the 5,000 square foot minimum.

Green said the city would incorporate the changes the commission recommends and redraft the ordinance. The plan is to present it to the planning commission again Jan. 12.

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