

Pot shops could move into John Day

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The John Day Planning Commission will review conditional use permits for two retail pot shops on Wednesday, Oct. 6.

Haley Olson, whose family owns Rocky Mountain Dispensary, told the Eagle that she plans to relocate to 743 West Street, inside the city limits near Timbers Bistro.

Rocky Mountain Dispensary, the county's only cannabis dispensary, began selling medical marijuana in 2016. Olson said the existing location, which is just outside the John Day city limits, would convert to a distribution and processing center.

Olson said currently, recreational sales make up 80% of her business while medical marijuana accounts for 20%. However, she said over the years the ratio has fluctuated because she and her staff encourage people who might qualify for a medical card to get one. She said the up-front cost in Oregon to get a medicinal marijuana card is \$400. Most people are unwilling to cough up that expense, she said, but they end up paying on the back end by way of a 20% sales tax on recreational cannabis.

She said the distribution center could move a variety of cannabis products from larger vendors from different parts



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

Cindy Kidd (left) Haley Olson, owners of Rocky Mountain Dispensary could be relocating their retail marijuana dispensary to John Day should the John Day planning commission approve a conditional use permit.

of the state. Such operations are heavily regulated by the Oregon Liquor & Cannabis Commission, Olson said. The OLCC requires, among other things, that producers store cannabis in secure locations with security cameras.

With a three-year backlog on licensing in the state, Olson is seeking a change in location instead of getting a new license.

Olson said she hopes to open at the new location in the winter of 2022, but the timeline could change as OLCC has a multi-step inspection and licensing process.

PUBLIC HEARING

The John Day Planning Commission will meet at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 6, in the city fire station to consider conditional use permits for two marijuana businesses and other matters.

The meeting is open to the public but can also be accessed virtually via Go-to-Meeting at this link: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/891173869>.

People can also dial in by phone at 1 (786) 535-3211, access code 891-173-869.

on the bottom floor. The application lists Mahogany Ridge Properties as the owner of the location.

Representatives of Burnt River Farms did not immediately respond to the Eagle's request for comment.

Cannabis in Grant County

The Grant County Court banned weed in the county's cities in 2015 after 56% of voters in Oregon passed Measure 91, allowing recreational marijuana businesses. An initiative to overturn the ban was narrowly defeated in May 2016, by 1,689 to 1,469 votes. In September of 2016, the county amended the ban to allow registered patients to pur-

chase medical marijuana.

In May of 2018, voters repealed the ban by an almost identical margin, with 1,687 voting to repeal and 1,492 voting to keep the ban in place.

Both attempts to overturn the ban were led by Olson and her mother, Cindy Kidd.

"Our family literally began knocking on doors," Kidd said, "and we got out into the community and got people on board."

Kidd said that Olson's father had cancer, and at the time there were no medical marijuana providers in Eastern Oregon.

She said there was a need for medical marijuana, and they opened Rocky Mountain Dispensary just outside the John Day city limits in 2017. In the beginning, they averaged five customers a day. Kidd said it was exciting for her and Olson, and the dispensary served a purpose.

They invested in a grow room after voters passed the statewide measure to legalize recreational pot, but then the county passed an ordinance to ban weed sales inside incorporated communities.

"In order for us to grow," Olson said, "we were going to have to move or change our local rule. We thought, 'Well, we're just gonna try to change the local rule.'"

Auction and concert to help local man

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Grant County residents are rallying around a beloved local business owner and longtime resident stricken with an ailment that has bounced him in and out of the hospital since January.

A dinner and auction to benefit Tracy Moss will be held on Oct. 22 in the Trowbridge Pavilion of the Grant County Fairgrounds in John Day.

Moss, the owner of Russell's Custom Meats in Canyon City, has long suffered from a blood infection caused by a bullet that has been lodged in his back since a shooting incident when he was 15, according to his wife, Kathy.

Kathy Moss said the condition did not become severe until 2008 after Moss stubbed a toe and doctors amputated it because the infection had spread to the bone. About 10 years ago, the condition flared up again and Tracy spent three months in the hospital. When he came out of the hospital, Kathy said, the busy couple processed 400 game animals that hunting season on top of their agricultural work.

Russell's Custom Meats, a Grant County staple, has been the go-to place for local and out-of-town hunters to take their big game animals for processing for decades. But Tracy and Kathy



Contributed photo

Tracy and Kathy Moss, owners of Russell's Custom Meats.

Moss are not only known as local business owners. Nancy Hitz, a longtime friend of the couple and organizer of the benefit, told the Eagle that Tracy and Kathy are always the first to step up for local causes and community fundraisers.

Hitz, who said she regards the couple as family, told the Eagle that while people sometimes run in large social circles, at the center of those circles is a small number of core relationships. Tracy and Kathy Moss, she said, are at the heart of her center and have been for more than two decades.

There's no doubt that Tracy's illness has put a strain on the couple's business. But according to Kathy, at a time when many employers are struggling to hire enough staff to maintain regular hours, Rus-

HOW TO HELP

The benefit concert and auction for Tracy Moss, which also includes a pulled-pork dinner, begins at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 22 in the Trowbridge Pavilion at the Grant County Fairgrounds in John Day. Admission is by donation.

Monetary donations to help with Tracy Moss's medical expenses can be made at the Bank of Eastern Oregon.

sell's employees are essentially running the business and have been for months now.

Tracy's most recent flare-up started in January and has seen him hospitalized several times. At the end of August, Kathy said, there was nothing more Blue Mountain Hospital could do for Tracy and he was flown by Life Flight helicopter to St. Charles Medical Center in Bend for further treatment.

Kathy said she would get up, spend four hours at Russell's, drive to Bend, spend two or three hours at the hospital, drive back home to John Day, and then get up and do it again the next morning. But as Tracy's condition worsened and he lost the ability to communicate, get around and feed himself, she needed to spend all her waking hours looking after her husband.

At that point, she said, Russell's was going to have to close unless the employees could handle all the day-to-day operations by themselves.

They chose to step up, she said.

"If it wasn't for (community support) and my employees," Kathy said, "I would not be talking to you coherently today. There comes a point in life where you have to do what you have to do, but it does take a village."

Benefit concert and auction

Hitz said the benefit has come together better than she

could have imagined.

Singer-songwriter Brenn Hill and Andy Nelson, a cowboy poet and humorist, are currently touring in Utah and immediately agreed to make the trek to Grant County to perform at the benefit.

Hitz said donations for the auction have poured in and include everything from an African safari to beef from the Crown Ranch Cattle Co. She said the organizers have a lengthy list of donations from business owners across the globe.

The event will begin with a pulled pork dinner from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., followed by the auction and concert. Admission is by donation.



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29th Annual

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Doors open at 5:30

Proceeds benefit several assisted-living facilities and home-bound seniors throughout Grant County.

If you would like more information or would like to help, call me or drop donations at A Flower Shop N More - my number is 541-620-2098 - mailing address is PO Box 192, John Day. We will accept items for the auction or monetary donations. We will accept donations up to Nov 10th.

This year the event is on Dec 3rd at the John Day Elks Lodge

Domestic Violence Shatters Lives



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