

## Bond

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said. "February of 2022 was just at the start of this inflationary cycle."

"Having that extra \$1 million of cushion on a \$5 million-\$7 million project is not a bad idea. The hope is that we never have to touch it," Ketchum said.

Also potentially lost if

the bond fails would be right around \$320,000 that the city has spent in developing design plans for the project.

John Day City Councilor Shannon Adair said during the Oct. 25 council meeting that the designers working on the pool plans can't be expected to work for free and that spending money on those plans was a step that had to be taken to secure any type of funding for the pool project.

The current plan is to use up to 20% of the \$2 million in lottery funds to pay for the cost of developing the pool plans. So far the city has spent \$320,000 to cover the cost of developing those plans and will have to take that money out of its own budget if the lottery grant has to be returned.

Ketchum explained that the city could apply for another \$2 million in lottery funding if the bond doesn't pass, but the pro-

cess would be a much tougher one the second time around.

"It would be more difficult to get back on the list ... especially if we demonstrate that it is not a sure thing that we'd be able to spend the money," Ketchum said.

Ketchum said he was "fairly confident" that the current vote is the last chance the community will have to obtain a pool for the foreseeable future in the event the pool bond fails.

"We worked really, really hard on this process," he said. "It's been a five-year process to get to this point. I don't think anyone has the appetite right now to turn around and restart a five-year process on a different kind of facility."

There were hopes among some that the \$2 million in lottery funding could be used to build a cheaper alternative to the estimated \$7.1 million proposal pre-

pared to voters within the John Day/Canyon City Parks and Recreation District. If the bond fails, however, it's not clear whether a formal proposal could be prepared in time to secure the lottery funds before the grant expires.

As Ketchum wrote in his staff report to the council, the city and the parks and rec district have until Jan. 15 to select a project in order to be eligible for the \$2 million in lottery funding.

## Pumpkins

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### 3,000-pound holy grail

To grow a pumpkin weighing more than 3,000 pounds, the hobby's current holy grail, breeders will also need to prolong the pumpkin's prime growing period, Cooper said.

Currently, the fruit grows at an optimum level about 30 days, which should be extended to 40-45 days to hit the 3,000-pound goal, he said. "It's not going to be long until we get there. We're almost there now."

Genetics are often freely exchanged in the giant pumpkin world, with growers sharing pollen and cooperating on breeding.

### No secrets

Each year, seeds from the top contestants are auctioned off to support the PGVG's weigh-off events, and new members get a seed packet when they join the club.

Whereas people would once gain insights from a book, the rate of innovation now moves too fast for traditional publishing, he said.

Growers now largely educate themselves online and are willing to tell their peers about successful methods to advance the hobby, Pugh said.

"Twenty years ago, if someone had a secret, it stayed a secret because they thought it gave them an edge. With how the world is now, there's no such thing as a secret," he said. "The digital age has really changed things."

Of course, the hobby is hardly devoid of rivalry, but growers say it's good-natured and furthers the noble aim of producing ridiculously large pumpkins.

"We're competitive with each other and we're competitive with ourselves, if we're talking about our personal best," Spielman said.



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Officials from Pacific Giant Vegetable Growers inspect the bottom of a giant pumpkin at a weigh-off at Bauman Farms near Gervais.

### How it's done

One of the main constraints on growing giant pumpkins is space.

At least 1,000 square feet are needed to produce a single "world class" pumpkin worthy of competition at the highest levels, Williams said.

Growers must be careful to remove all but the sole female flower that's meant to be pollinated, so all the vine's energy is focused on the resulting pumpkin, he said.

"That's the golden rule. To maximize that growth, you just want one fruit per plant," he said.

Sprinkling mycorrhizal fungi into the soil helps the plant better absorb water and nutrients, Pugh said. Vigor is further enhanced by burying portions of the vine so additional roots grow from the nodes.

"Instead of one root, you get hundreds of roots," he said.

Another limiting factor is common to all agricultural pursuits — the weather. The earlier the vine is established and the fruit is fertilized, the more time the pumpkin has to attain an incredible size.

Rain and low temperatures can diminish that growth opportunity, as occurred this spring, which has compelled some grow-

ers to install greenhouses.

"If the weather doesn't cooperate, you can manipulate the environment," Pugh said, adding that such investments can become expensive. "There are people who spend a lot of money, no question about it."

### Other competitions

Those who lack the capacity to maximally fatten pumpkins have other ways to shine among aficionados.

For example, Williams doesn't have enough room in his garden to grow colossal pumpkins, but he's still managed to make a name for himself with long gourds.

The vegetable grows suspended from trellises, allowing him to be a leading contender in the category despite the confined dimensions of his garden.

Gary Kristensen found another way to overcome the tight parameters of his yard in Happy Valley.

Instead of worrying about size, he's been selecting for vibrant color to stand out in competitions based on visual appeal.

"I don't have the space or the skill to be the biggest, so I grow as orange of a pumpkin as I can," said Kristensen, a real estate appraiser.



Tony Chiotti/Blue Mountain Eagle

Defense attorney Andrea Coit makes opening arguments in the Tyler Smith trial in Grant County Circuit Court on Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2022.

## Smith

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for their upcoming arguments and introduced the witnesses and testimony jurors could expect in the days ahead. And both noted the complexity of the information that is to come.

The prosecution gave its statement first. Kimberly explained that the victim's own journal detailing the events in question would play a central role in the prosecution's case and spent time trying to preempt any claims of conspiracy on the part of the defense. Kimberly noted that there will not be physical evidence of the crime itself, as it was not reported for nearly a year, but emphasized that the case for the prosecution relies largely on the credibility of the victim's testimony. She told the jurors that any witness can be relied on to settle a disputed fact.

The defense outlined its arguments as focusing on both the veracity of the testimony as well as the victim's journal entry detailing the alleged attack. Coit brought in the larger context in which these events occurred, saying that Smith, then a Grant County sheriff's dep-

uty, was viewed as a threat to the sheriff's office because he intended to reveal what she called an internal coverup regarding the investigation of Abigail Mobley, then a Grant County Jail employee. Coit further questioned the role and motives of then-Sheriff Glenn Palmer and current District Attorney Jim Carpenter, whom she implied were part of the alleged coverup of the events at the jail involving Abigail Mobley, then-wife of Undersheriff Zach Mobley. Coit noted the complexity of the case, ultimately building to the declaration that "sometimes conspiracies are true."

The witness list hints at the extraordinary nature of the case, as testimony is to focus not only on the details surrounding the alleged crime itself but also on the defense allegations regarding the motives and actions of the Grant County Sheriff's Office. The witness list includes the current Grant County district attorney, former Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer, current Grant County Undersheriff Zach Mobley, the sheriff of Wheeler County, and Oregon State Police investigators who looked into allegations of misconduct against then-Grant County Deputy Abigail Mobley.

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