

School: City support for museum's purchase could be in legal gray area



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian
The expansive gym at the Cannon Beach Elementary School currently sits unused.

Continued from Page A1

"Seventy percent of new transit lodging taxes are restricted to tourism promotion," Driscoll said, with funds designated mostly for advertising, publications, strategic planning, and marketing for special events and festivals.

But what exactly constitutes a tourism facility is blurry and there isn't a lot of legal precedent to go on. Promotion is very clear in legislation but guidance for tourism

related facilities is only supported by an Attorney General opinion in 2008.

General guidance indicates that the funds need to be used for improved real property on a building with a primary function of tourism, but beyond that, there's nothing in state law prohibiting the city from giving the tax revenue to either a nonprofit or for-profit business to work on their behalf.

Driscoll cautioned the city to provide strict guidance regarding

how the money could be used and include a reverter clause should the museum choose to sell the property in the future, if they do chose to award the museum the funds for the due diligence in their efforts to purchase the old elementary school site.

Mayor Sam Steidel also asked if tourism funding could be used to manage special events directly and Driscoll said that that exact question was in front of the Oregon legislature at present.

Medal of Honor: Moses Williams 'showed grit'

Continued from Page A1

Historian Greg Shine detailed Moses' 31-year military career and his arrival in Oregon during a March 14 lecture in the Cannon Beach History Center.

The first official units of African American soldiers were formed during the Civil War. More than 180,000 African Americans served in 163 units.

Following the war, the Army created regiments, consisting entirely of African Americans led by white officers. These included the 9th and 10th Calvary and the 24th and 25th Infantries.

After serving in the South during Reconstruction, the regiments were transferred to the West by 1877.

"This is the era most commonly associated with Buffalo Soldiers — the Indian Wars era roughly between 1866 and 1891," Shine said.

When the term, "Buffalo Soldiers," came into use and what it refers to is unknown, Shine said. He read a letter from 1872 that describes one of the earliest references: "The Indians called them 'Buffalo Soldiers' because their woolly heads are so much like the matted cushion between the horns of the buffalo."

Other sources describe the name as a tribute to the



Greg Shine

"similarity of the bison who fought ferociously, displaying uncommon stamina and courage," Shine said.

"The oral tradition among Native Americans supports this and can be traced back to about 1867."

The term now applies to all African American soldiers in the American West, whether cavalry or infantry, he said. The 2,500 to 3,000 Buffalo soldiers constituted 10 percent of all the Army's infantry and 20 percent of all cavalry.

"Black soldiers used military service as a strategy to obtain equal rights as citizens, but this came at a cost — the defeat and dispossession of native people," Shine added.

In 1866, Moses Williams, 21, who couldn't read or write, joined the Army, and during his 31-year career, he became literate and rose to the highest position an African American could achieve.

For 19 years he fought in the Indian Wars, assigned to at least 23 forts throughout the West. In 1885, he was appointed as ordnance sergeant by the U.S. Secretary of War and was responsible for the care of armaments,

primarily cannons, guns and ammunition, at Fort Buford in North Dakota.

Four years later, Williams was reassigned to Fort Stevens on Oct. 15, 1895. He served the last 2.5 years of his career there.

He faced several challenges, Shine said. "Inside the old earthwork fort in 1895, time stood still. There were 34 old muzzle-loading cannons, 10 unmounted cannon tubes and 24 cannons that were on unserviceable or limited-use wooden platforms."

By the standards he was used to working with at Fort Buford, these weapons were antiquated, Shine added.

But outside the earthwork fort, technology was quickly advancing, Shine said. "Williams was soon surrounded by one of the largest construction projects the site had ever seen" and the largest in Oregon at the time. It was a massive expansion of a west battery replacement for four cutting edge "disappearing" guns, which would "disappear" behind the parapet after firing to be reloaded. More than 130 laborers worked on it.

During his stay at Fort Stevens, Williams applied for and received the Medal of Honor. His application was accompanied by a letter from his former commanding officer citing Williams' bravery, skill and "unflinching devotion to duty" at the battle of Cuchillo Negro Creek 15 years earlier.

In this era, "It was not uncommon in the era for soldiers to initiate their own claims for Medals of Honor," Shine said.

He was one of 22 Buffalo soldiers to receive Medals of Honor for their action in the Indian wars and the 1898 war in Cuba.

Williams retired on May 12, 1898, at age 53. He moved to the Fort Vancouver barracks and was found dead in his bed on Aug. 23, 1899.

In 1991 Gen. Colin Powell dedicated a monument to Williams and three other Medal of Honor recipients on Officers Row in Fort Vancouver. In 1989, the Moses Williams Pacific Northwest chapter of the Buffalo Soldiers was chartered in Portland.

Williams' legacy "shows the value of black self-determination and agency during the post-war era of Jim Crow and racial animosity," Shine said.

"Williams showed grit, he moved up, he served with valor, he leveraged his distinguished service into a highly sought-after position as ordnance sergeant, and he actively pursued the Medal of Honor to which he was entitled."

Haystack: Ongoing study of puffin populations

Continued from Page A1

the Oregon Coast from Tillamook Head south to the California-Oregon border. The Oregon Islands — which includes Haystack Rock — is one of the refuges in the complex, along with Three Arch Rocks in Tillamook County.

Haystack Rock is currently home to the largest concentration of breeding tufted puffins in Oregon, but could eventually be surpassed by Three Arch Rocks, Stephensen said.

Except for in the Aleutian Islands, the tufted puffin population is declining worldwide.

The local population was recorded as 612 in 1988 and about 127 in 2018, based on 68 to 71 active burrows. Although Stephensen said he was not overly confident in the methodology used to determine the population in 1988, they are certain there has been a population decline in the past 30 years.

Recently, however, he

added, "the colony at Haystack Rock has fluctuated a little bit but is mainly consistent."

The data they collect also includes identification of the puffins' prey and breeding phenology, including prospecting, egg-laying, incubating, hatching and fledging.

To study tufted puffins in a more intimate and detail-rich way, the department wants to put minuscule transmitters on a few birds to track their movement. They also want to take blood and fecal samples to analyze the birds' diet and determine whether the Haystack Rock colony is genetically unique from other tufted puffins. The Friends of Haystack Rock provided \$15,000 to assist with the project, which also would help researchers figure out where

the birds migrate to during the winter.

"It's an incredible process to go through to get a species listed," Stephensen said, adding the process is worthwhile.

When a species is listed, he said, they receive "special attention and money is funneled to conduct studies," which can help with the species' recovery.

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