



Local man wants former Lexington school to be Airbnb or bed and breakfast

Plans to make lobby area a town museum

By David Sykes

Local businessman Sam Bellamy says he has plans to turn the former Lexington school building into either an Airbnb or a bed and breakfast, he told the town council last week.

Bellamy says he hasn't made up his mind yet on which model to go with, saying he was still researching rules, etc. on operation of both types of facilities. In addition, he told the council he also wants to make the lobby area into a museum type area featuring old photos and things from Lexington's history and past. "I want to paint the walls with old pictures," he told the council of his plans for the building. Bellamy said he would later be soliciting photos from people to put in the museum.

Bellamy bought the 1.94-acre school site including the 12,862 square foot brick building from the school district. It had been a long time since any classes were held there, and the district had since moved its offices out of the building. It was empty and unused when Bellamy made the purchase in 2016.

Plans for the building include two lobby areas one on the ground floor and one on the second floor. There will be six living units including two 2-bedroom and four single bedrooms, he said. "They will not be long-term apartments," Bellamy emphasized. Also, on the lower level will be a full-service kitchen and laundry area that can be shared between the guests. He passed out a sketch of the plans he has for the building remodel. Councilmembers were enthusiastic about the project with some suggesting he look at setting up a coffee shop in the lower lobby area and maybe leasing the space to an operator. While Bellamy did not commit to a coffee shop, he did say "I'm not opposed to that idea."

Bellamy already has Department of Environmental Quality approval for the Airbnb or bed and breakfast concept having earlier received the department's okay when he had planned to build a recreational vehicle park on the property. He dropped that idea following objections from some of the neighbors.

The council liked the ideas and plans Bellamy presented, and voted unanimously to write a letter in support of the facility. Bellamy did not give a timeline for the project; however, the land is already zoned commercial.



If local businessman Sam Bellamy's plans work out, this old Lexington School building will have new life as a short-term visitor business.

Fire Department develops new logo



The Lexington Fire Department has developed a new logo incorporating town symbol, the jackrabbit. -Design by Jess Schiller.

In other business at the February 9 meeting the council heard a report on fire department activities from firefighter Josie Miles. She said the department is working on a new Maltese Cross fire fighter emblem. She showed a proposed logo that incorporated the town's jackrabbit symbol. "Lexington and the surrounding communities have responded well to the 'return of the jackrabbit'," she told the council. "The presence of the old school mascot on our water tower and new city signs has sparked many conversations and pride from longtime residents," she said. "The fire department would like to build on this excitement and update our Maltese Cross to represent our community and its history. We are working to rebuild our department and look forward to working with the council to strengthen our community. Adding the jackrabbit to our cross is something we hope will help distinguish us from other departments and spark community pride and support in our department," Miles told the council. She said the department is preparing now to order new door decals for the engines and new personnel apparel that will all be updated with the new jackrabbit logo.

In other business from the fire department, Miles said Hermiston Fire has presented the department with an opportunity to purchase its 1990 Spartan pumper engine for \$6,000. She said this would replace Lexington's 1971 red LaFrance pumper engine.

Miles said the LaFrance truck is the oldest engine in Lexington's fleet and needs significant repairs to be reliable, adding that a replacement is needed. "The Spartan would become our newest vehicle in the fleet and offers several upgrades from our existing engine," she told the council. Miles said one of these upgrades is a fully enclosed cab that seats six personnel. She said the current budget has the funds to purchase the truck and new dual tires it needs. Miles also said the new tender purchased earlier from Ione has also been received had been sent to the local body shop in town to have the Ione logo removed. "This was done as a donation to the department and was no cost to us. The truck is now prepped and ready for its new logo," Miles told the council.

Miles also reported on new virtual meeting equipment and printer for the fire department that have all been installed and are in use. "This will allow us to conduct our own training meetings and host virtual meetings from our fire hall," she told the council, adding that the items were all purchased with COVID grant money received in 2020.

In other town business, the council heard a report from maintenance man Scott Lamb who said a section of city road near Clark's Canyon would be chip sealed later in the year, having received a bid from the county to do the work for \$18,000 "for the whole thing." He said the work would be done sometime between June and Sept. 1. "We have to budget for it, but I think we should do it," said councilmember Bobbi Gordon.

Lamb also said one of the large trees at the park in town had died and would have to be removed. "It's sixty feet tall, one of the big ones but I doubt it," he said. Lamb also reported he had a bid to fix the shop roof for \$425, which the council said if it was in the budget should be done.

In other city business,

councilmember Gordon said she was "very pleased" with the town's new audit firm Solutions, CPAs out of John Day. After the city was informed by previous auditor in La Grande it was no longer available to do the work, the town missed its Dec. 31 audit deadline. Gordon said she contacted the new auditors. "They stepped right up and said they would do the audit and get an extension for us," Gordon said. "I have been happy with them and I am really glad to work with this audit firm," she told the council.

In other action the council appointed Eric Imes to the town budget committee. Imes works for the county road department where he is the assistant road master. Sheila Miller and Myrna Sieler are returning to the committee after serving last year. The council set March 2 as the first budget committee meeting.

In other action the council voted to increase the town water rate by \$1 per month starting with the July 1 billing. That would increase the base rate to \$48 per month. "We're going to run out of money in the water budget if we don't do something," Gordon said of the needed increase. She said the action now would allow the budget committee to budget in the funds for the upcoming fiscal year.

Free COVID-19 testing event in Heppner cancelled

The Oregon Health Authority, in partnership with the Morrow County Health Department, has cancelled the Friday, February 19 free COVID-19 testing clinic at the Morrow County Fairgrounds, due to weather and road conditions. Please stay informed on rescheduled events on Morrow County Health Department's Facebook page or in future press releases.

To learn more about

your eligibility for vaccinations, and other important health and safety information, visit co.morrow.or.us/publichealth, email COVIDVaccine@co.morrow.or.us, or call 541-676-5649. Morrow County Health Department also has an online form available online to submit your interest in a vaccine, and has future clinics planned for vaccine distribution.

Procession held to honor Steve Myren



A Boardman fire truck passed through Heppner during the Feb. 14 procession honoring Steve Myren. Inset: Steve Myren.

A procession honoring Steve Myren, the former Morrow County Sheriff's Department Undersheriff, was held on February 14. The procession of nearly 50 vehicles began about 10 a.m. at the Heppner Fire Hall on its way to the Boardman Marina.

The procession was led by Sheriff Matlack and Myren's wife, Mim. A second procession began in Irrigon, meeting up with the Heppner group on Wilson Lane in Boardman.

Myren passed away on February 1 after a short bout with cancer, at the age of 58.

Council adopts '21 city goals

New city sewer treatment system ranked number one



Heppner City Councilmember John Bowles (left) was sworn in last week to another term on the Heppner City Council. -Photo by David Sykes.

By David Sykes

The Heppner City Council last week adopted the 2021 goals for the city. Number one on the list is the continued work on the sewer retention pond project, including readying plans and finding a location for the lagoon and going out for bids. Heppner has been notified by the state Department of Environmental Quality, DEQ, that it will have to discontinue dumping treated effluent from its sewer plant into Willow Creek. The DEQ says there is too much ammonia in the effluent so dumping must be stopped. Several extensions to find a replacement have been granted to the city, and the most economical and feasible way to deal with the problem seems to be to

- develop a lagoon system for treatment of the effluent.
- The rest of the eleven 2021 goals for the city adopted by the council include:
 2. Continue work on the street projects, start construction. (short term).
 3. Downtown improvement evaluation - improve info signage and repair sidewalks. Continue replacement of some trees. (long term).
 4. Plan to improve mini park at Post Office - Bottle filler, information station, complete pavilion/gazebo, pave and/or cement. (long term).
 5. Evaluate and plan

-See '21 GOALS/PAGE TWO

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