

LETTERS

Community center sale a poor decision

If the city of Hermiston follows through with the sale of the Hermiston Community Center, then Bryan Wolfe and Tim Mabry need to dust off their donation list and see that the city return that \$665,000 in donations received from community and business donors.

This is a community building run by the city, not an asset the city can sell off at their leisure. Another poor decision being considered by our city council and mayor.

**Gary Quick
Hermiston**

Hermiston schools in need of updates, expansion

To the editor:
When I came to Hermiston as superintendent of schools in 1991, we had about 3,500 students in six schools. Today, 28 years later, we have almost 6,000 students in seven schools. Though some remodeling has been accomplished, four replacement schools built and many temporary portable classrooms brought in, our student population is almost 2,500

more than in 1991, with only one additional school. Classrooms are needed, and schools are over capacity.

As I recall, Rocky Heights Elementary is sneaking up on 60 years old. By the way, 60 years is the average lifespan of a school in America. A school gets a great deal of wear and tear from its use by students as well as the many community groups who use the schools well into the night. I can assure you that the maintenance needs of old schools are a money pit, not to mention the unmet safety needs for students, staff and the community. To draw an analogy, I don't see many of us driving a 1959 car as our daily driver.

Our schools are in need of more capacity for our present student population and some room for future growth. Plus, our schools need to be safe, up-to-date and efficient.

As an educator in Oregon since 1967, I have seen a great many school bond plans presented to the public by superintendents and school boards. This is a very good plan. I urge you to vote for capacity, safety and efficiency in our Hermiston schools.

**Jer Pratton
Hermiston**

COLUMN

I'm dialing in my inner ghostbuster

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
COMMUNITY EDITOR

A bit of an adrenaline junkie, I like things that get my heart pumping — including scary stories and even ghost hunting. A couple of recent trips with friends have featured things that go bump in the night.

I wouldn't say I'm an all-out believer, but I entertain the possibility that the spirits of someone or something can linger. Of course, with friends like Carol Greene and her daughter, Cassie, the seemingly sinister activity might just be a twisted sense of humor.

Last summer, we took the Spirits of Seattle Ghost Tour. Jake Jacobson, owner of Private Eye Tours, showed us the sites and shared spooky stories about the Emerald City.

We stayed at a funky Airbnb in Bothel. Housed in the bottom level of a house, I think Carol and Cassie were a bit unnerved that the homeowner had access to our quarters. However, I think the dude was pretty harmless.

I did get unnerved after returning from the ghost tour. While getting a Pepsi, I felt something tap my shoulder. After looking around, I pondered whether I should alarm my friends.

Standing around the corner, Cassie suddenly burst into laughter. Seriously, I was freaking out thinking a ghost followed us back — Cassie really could have



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Members of Big River Paranormal descend the staircase at Geiser Grand Hotel to try to determine where music is coming from. The team regularly leads investigations at the historic Baker City landmark.

played that up longer.

There were a few odd occurrences during the tour, including my camera malfunctioning while in The Pine Box — an old funeral parlor turned bar/nightclub. But, even weirder things happened when we stayed at the Geiser Grand Hotel earlier this year.

We specifically went to participate in a tour with Big River Paranormal. The Boise-based group leads investigations in the historic Baker City landmark.

Built in 1889, the structure sat derelict for more than two decades when Dwight and Barbara Sidway purchased it in 1993, reopening it five years later. After a lot of curiosity about the possibility of it being haunted, Barbara

contacted the paranormal group — inviting them to lead regular investigations at the hotel.

Serena Hinojosa, Big River's managing partner, said they don't always obtain solid evidence of paranormal activity at the Geiser Grand. However, that's not to say it isn't regularly occurring, it's just that they don't have scientific evidence to corroborate it. Team members and hotel guests, she said, have seen and heard things and been touched.

While anticipation of the investigation could have played on our senses, Carol, Cassie and I experienced a few bizarre happenings during our stay.

After dinner, Carol was pacing along the far wall

of our room. Glancing around, she pulled back the curtain and picked up a blanket from the recliner. With a puzzled look on her face, she asked if we had seen her e-cig.

Although it wasn't there just moments prior, the bright pink device was now on the windowsill. Also, an incident in the hotel's gift shop left us scratching our heads. Carol had just examined an hourglass-type device without any problems. Yet, when Cassie tried to see how it worked, it was like the bottom was glued on tight.

Other unusual occurrences included my fully-charged laptop battery draining while sitting unused for an hour, a low-level buzzing sound at night and dramatic fluctuations in the room temperature.

Sidway said for the most part Geiser Grand's ghostly encounters aren't scary in nature. The stories she's heard depict friendly and jovial encounters. Sidway said hotel staff has fun with its reputation — blaming ghosts when someone misplaces or breaks something.

I ain't afraid of no ghosts — well, maybe just a little.

Tammy Malgesini is the community editor. Her column, Inside my Shoes, includes general musings about life. Contact her at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539.

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\$295,000 - 4 Bedroom 3 Bath Tri Level. Very nice throughout. Large fenced yard. Updated kitchen. Large deck and nice city view. Close to shopping. **MLS# 19655891 Rocky Mikesell Blue Jeans Realty**
"Our office is wherever you are"
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\$89,000
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