



CITY OF JOHN DAY

mayor
Ron Lundbom

city manager
Nicholas Green

secretary
Chantal DesJardin

council
Shannon Adair
Gregg Haberly
Dave Holland
Steve Schuette
Elliot Sky
Paul Smith

November 10, 2020

Representative Mark Owens
900 Court St NE, H-475 Salem, OR, 97301
Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov
<http://www.oregonlegislature.gov/owens>

Dear Representative Owens,

As you well know, 2020 has been a year for the ages. Clearly, the priority for Oregon's legislators at the moment is getting the economy and budget back on track in the wake of COVID-19 and this summer's historic wildfire season. That said, I am writing to urge your support for the reallocation of funding to the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant (OMSRG) fund, which will be critical to economic recovery in Oregon's small towns.

This fund – separate from the general fund - was established in 2015 with a \$2.5 million allocation and was re-funded with \$5 million in lottery bond proceeds in 2017 (*HB 5530*). The funding was again added during the contentious 2019 session, thanks to a monumental effort from organizations like ours to make it a bipartisan priority in the 11th hour of the session. That allocation was part of a lottery bond package scheduled to be sold in spring 2021. Unfortunately, the Legislative Emergency Board canceled the bond package sale in July due to lottery short falls as a result of COVID-19. This program is one of many that requires a certain portion of its funding – in this case, at least 50% – go to rural communities.

In its first two grant cycles, the OMSRG program funded 56 projects in 37 communities across Oregon. Thirty of those communities have a population under 30,000. Grants up to \$200,000 were awarded to enable economic revitalization projects such as building acquisition, new construction, façade improvements, historic theater acquisition, and the conversion of vacant properties to residential inventory. **The City of John Day is grateful to have received two of these grants – one in 2017 to assist in funding the redevelopment of the Weaver Building, one of our largest mixed use buildings in John Day, and another in 2019 to revitalize the Len's Drug Pharmacy with a 6,345 sf expanded retail footprint, façade and building improvements. As with most of the projects that these grants support, it is unlikely that these projects would have been feasible were it not for the grant funding.**



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As Oregon moves forward out of the most impactful economic disruption since the Great Depression, it is now more important than ever that programs such as the OMSRG remain funded. Legislative action is required to re-fund this program, either through a general fund allocation or a repackaged lottery bond sale.

I would like to personally invite you to meet in downtown John Day prior to the 2021 legislative session to hear how this program has impacted rural communities including ours, and to see two of the completed projects. I'm confident it will be enough to persuade you help us get this program refunded. Please contact me at (541) 575-0028 or green@grantcounty-or.gov to arrange a visit.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ron Lundbom
Mayor