

City of John Day Newsletter



August 2018

Dear Residents –

It has been an exciting summer for the city. We have multiple projects in the works and more on the way. This newsletter will provide a brief update on several of them. Because there are so many, I won't have the space to get into a lot of detail in this month's newsletter – just enough to whet your appetite. Please feel free to come to a council meeting or check out our website for more information @ www.cityofjohnday.com.

Floodplain map updates

About 300 residents will be getting a letter from the City next week notifying you of changes to our floodplain. The Army Corps of Engineers completed a flood study in December of 2014 for the John Day / Canyon City area. The results of the study were sent to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) along with a request for a comprehensive update to the area's Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). The FIRM is the official map of a community on which FEMA delineates both the special hazard areas and the risk premium zones for flooding.

In plain English, the maps we currently use are old and out-of-date. They are based on studies done in the early 1970s, which do not accurately show the real flood risk for many of our residents. This is due in part to changes in the river and changes to our environment that have occurred over the last 40 years. We also now have better instruments to collect data on our annual flow rates and better mapping software to help develop the complex models used to determine where in the city a flood is likely to occur.

A public hearing will be held on October 24th at the old gym in Grant Union High School to present the proposed maps. The City will post notice of the public hearing and send a letter to each affected property owner prior to the hearing. We also have copies of the new maps posted at city hall. Everyone is welcome to stop by and review them prior to the meeting.

Please know that, if your property changes because of the study, it reflects a more accurate depiction of your actual flood risk than we have today. If you believe the data are wrong or there are other circumstances that

change the outcome for your property, please plan to attend the public hearing and we will discuss the process to have your property re-evaluated. Also, please note that the hearing is just one more step in a lengthy process. The new FIRMs will not become official until you receive notice from FEMA that the new maps have been approved.

Congratulate our new Chief of Police

On August 28, I swore in Mike Durr as the city's new Chief of Police. Chief Durr joined the police department in the spring of 2014 after retiring from the Oregon State Police. He has served as a John Day police officer for over four years, and for the past four months, has been our interim Chief of Police. Mike brings a wealth of experience to the city and has done a tremendous job leading the department. Please take the opportunity to congratulate Chief Durr on his new position!

9-1-1 Center & Fire Hall Open House

On April 27, we successfully closed on a complicated loan consolidation for \$2.1 million. The loan reduced the interest rate on much of our existing debt and accelerated our repayment schedule. As a result, most of our outstanding debts will be paid in full within four years at a cost savings of over \$320,000 for our rate payers. The consolidation also allowed us to recapitalize the fire station loan and free up funds to complete its construction. Because of the interest savings, we were able to resume construction without raising taxes or placing additional financial burdens on our residents. We have also eased the financial burden on both the 9-1-1 Center and the fire department by co-locating these public safety services under one roof.

Beginning in January, the newly reorganized Grant County Emergency Communications Agency will take over operations of the 9-1-1 Center from the city. The new center will be completely rebuilt with all new equipment and furnishings. We are also completing the restrooms, showers, offices and storage bays for the fire department. Construction is scheduled to be completed early in November, and we will host an open house in mid-to-late November. Please plan to drop by and see the newly completed facility before it goes live.

City greenhouse is approved

The city council approved the final purchase and sale agreement for our new EuroMex greenhouse from on August 28th. Construction will begin next month on the site preparation and we hope to have this facility finished and operational by the end of November.

The greenhouse will be located on the east end of Oregon Pine and will be situated due east of the existing planar shed, just in front of the steel shop, on a two-acre area that is above the 100-year floodplain. Access to the greenhouse will be from Highway 26 next to Mill's Building Supply.

The greenhouse will have 3,000 plant spaces dedicated to growing lettuce. Varieties include Head Lettuce, Romaine, Green and Red Leaf, Kale, and Spinach. We will have two ponds, or 110 square feet of space dedicated to fresh herbs, which include Cilantro, Parsley, Arugula, Basil, and others.

There will 966 plant spaces dedicated to growing fruiting and vine crops. These will be divided between 750 tomato plants, 100 cucumber plants, and 116 pepper plants. Tomato varieties will include Tomatoes on the Vine, Beefsteak, Roma, and Cherry. Cucumber varieties will include Mini and English. Pepper varieties include Green, Red, and Orange Bell Peppers.

In addition to meeting much of our local produce need, we are also using this investment to help launch a new controlled environment agriculture industry in John Day. Hydroponic crops are a high-growth industry, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18%.

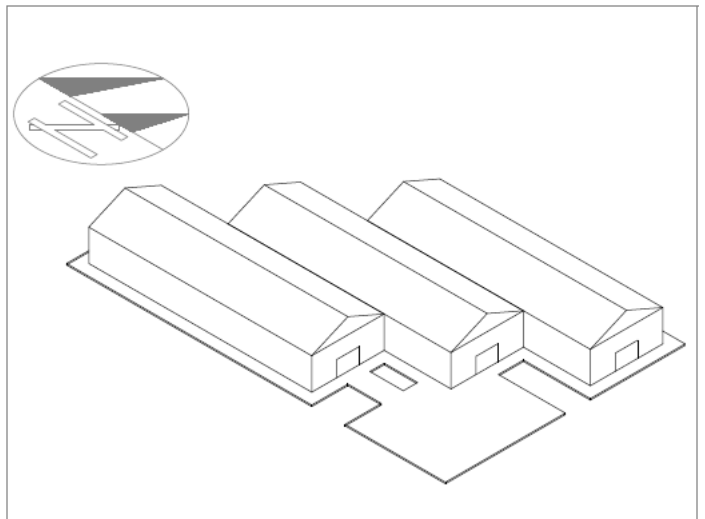
Global declines in arable land, a growing population and rising demand for food security – coupled with technological advancements in hydroponics and water reclamation – are just some of the factors boosting the market growth that make this an attractive investment.

By the time we are finished, we will be operating a state-of-the-art facility providing: a sustainable harvest of locally grown, fresh produce year-round; 2-3 living wage jobs in an advanced industry; academic and research opportunities for our students; a revenue source to help offset rising costs for wastewater treatment; and a new source of value for the city. This is an exciting project and we're looking forward to pioneering this new economic frontier.

Pool feasibility study

Many of you have heard about our pool feasibility study. Our pool is a great asset, but at almost 70-years old, it is also nearing the end of its useful life. We have a unique opportunity to sell the current pool and park to the Oregon State Parks & Recreation Department, so they can build a new Kam Wah Chung interpretive center – a great community asset. Money from the sale would be used to offset some of the cost of a new pool facility. We think this would be a wise investment, but before we can have a meaningful conversation with our residents about building a new pool facility, we need to have a better understanding of what it will cost.

Many of you are aware that the city has been down this road before. Building a new pool is an expensive undertaking. However, there are several factors that make this time unique.



(An existing EuroMex greenhouse (left) and their three-bay, staggered design for our 6,000 sq. foot facility (right))



(Sample design from Counsilman-Hunsaker)

First, our 25-year agreement with the John Day/Canyon City Parks and Recreation Department will end in 2020. At that point, operations of the pool will revert to the City of John Day. We do not want to close the pool. Our goal is to keep it open without losing a season. However, its age and condition will not allow us to operate it indefinitely. Second, the opportunity to sell the 3-acre site of the existing park and pool will create a capital investment fund we can use as seed money to attract more public and non-profit investment. Third, the economic distress we have experienced over the past 20-30 years can be used to our advantage by reducing the amount of local funding we need as matching funds for state grants. Fourth, thanks to the purchase of Oregon Pine and other properties acquired over the past year, we now have new options for locating a pool we have never had before. And finally, with the hospital bond ending in three years, our residents will have a unique opportunity to bond for a new all-season pool and indoor recreation area with little-to-no increase in taxes.

None of these factors guarantees a successful outcome, but we believe there are enough reasons to try, so we have hired Counsilman-Hunsaker, a national leader in aquatics facility design, to be our lead consultant on this project. They will work with Walker Macy, our lead architect on the Innovation Gateway project, to create an achievable design that meets our community's needs. There will be at least three open houses and multiple public hearings where you will have the opportunity to provide feedback as we go through this process over the coming year. If we work together, we can make smart investments today that will benefit ourselves, our children and our grandchildren for generations to come.

Street & Trail Improvement Projects

New and expanded programs under the Oregon Department of Transportation were created in the 2017 transportation bill to help small cities expand their street and multi-modal trail networks. As a result, in the coming years we plan to pursue new street and trail improvement projects throughout the city.

Under these new programs, work has already begun on the Canton Street Extension. This project was approved by the city council earlier this year. It will extend the north end of Canton Street by 195-feet to provide access to new residential developments and the proposed location for the new city park. This four-acre parcel is a beautiful location at the intersection of the John Day River and Canyon Creek. We would like to thank the Hill family for allowing the city to purchase this property and place it in the public trust. Walker Macy will include this location in the design for our new area development plan and you will have the opportunity to work with the city council and our project team as we explore ideas for creating new natural play areas, botanical gardens, and outdoor recreational opportunities at this and other locations along our riverfront.

The city council has also applied for funding for two new street improvement projects – reworking the six-way intersection at Charolais Heights to improve traffic flow and extending access from Valley View Drive south and west to Patterson Bridge Road. These projects and others will be updated in our new Transportation System Plan, which will be developed later this year.

Innovation Gateway Area Development Plan

With the city's most recent acquisitions, we now own nearly 90-acres of undeveloped land along the John Day river, stretching west from Bridge Street to Patterson Bridge Road. Our project team creating the development plan for this area includes some of the best architects, land use planners, river restoration and water resources engineers in the state. In the coming months, you'll have the opportunity to participate in this exciting project that will re-orient our growth and development along the riverfront and will make the John Day River a central feature of our community. Thank you for your support and encouragement on all these projects. It is an exciting time for John Day!

Sincerely,