



CITY OF JOHN DAY

Newsletter – June 2020

Dear Residents –

It has been nine months since my last newsletter! What an eventful time this has been. Who would have predicted a global pandemic that would cause so much economic damage in such a short period of time? We have been fortunate to have an incredibly low case count up to this point. We know it has been difficult, but we appreciate the efforts you are making to stay safe and help prevent the spread of infection in our community.

We continue to work with state and federal officials to try and course correct after our economic shutdown to find the right balance between health, safety and the viability of our small businesses. There's little doubt that our initial response was reactionary at best. My hope is that we can recover steadily as the economy reopens and avoid further closures, but much of that is out of our hands as a small community. We are participating actively with the League of Oregon Cities and other small cities across the state to amplify our voice.

We're doing what we can to secure state and federal funding to continue to provide the services we need and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves as a result of the Coronavirus Relief Fund. I'll discuss one of those opportunities in this newsletter. At the same time, we are not optimistic that conditions will improve in the near-term. Until there is a vaccine or we have learned how to operate effectively during a global pandemic, we're going to continue to see budgetary pressure on all our departments and services.

For these reasons, the budget I presented and that the budget committee approved this year has our lowest staff levels in the four years I've been here. We've held wages constant with no cost of living increases for employees and have reduced staff to operate as lean as we possibly can. Our overhead to administer the city is only 7 percent of our operating costs. We are trying to do our part to keep services affordable and will make additional adjustments as needed to balance the budget.

Project Funding Updates

In spite of these challenges, there are opportunities on the horizon. The state is convening a special session to discuss the economic recovery from the coronavirus and several federal agencies have seen significant increases for specific grant programs to help communities invest in their own economies.

Our city has no shortage of capital improvement projects, and in the last three months we've requested millions of dollars in funding for these projects – including construction of over three miles of new roads, the completion of fiber optic networks to every home in John Day that currently lacks access to high speed internet, and expansion of our parks and recreation areas along the riverfront. So far this year we've received \$150,000 in grant reimbursements and another \$140,000 in new funding to help plan and build these projects, with more on the way. This money is being directly invested in our community through contracts with local small businesses.

Treatment Plant Update



We are hiring Flagline Engineering (Bend, OR) and Kennedy Jenks (Portland, OR) as a new engineering team to help us complete the design and planning for the new wastewater treatment plant. This team will perform value engineering to review all of the alternatives for upgrades to the existing plant, options for various types of construction, life cycle cost analysis and supporting

documents to help create the best financial option for the City. The team will begin work in July and complete their analysis by early fall. We will then be prepared to go into construction on the new plant. The City purchased an additional 14-acres of land from Iron Triangle for our planned street improvements in the area and secured grant funding to help complete the environmental studies and remediation needed to begin construction.

This is a lengthy process that requires permitting, funding and design to align perfectly in order to proceed with construction. We are also making improvements to an aging facility that is now over 70 years old. We are taking our time to ensure all three of these components are aligned and we are getting the best overall value for our community.

This is one of the most expensive projects a community can undertake and we need to get it right. Our additional engineering team will help ensure that we're getting the best possible advice as we move into construction later this year. In the Fall, upon completion of the Flagline/Kennedy Jenks team's work, we will hold another public hearing to present the approach and plans for this facility and update you on the status of this important project.

Gleason Pool Replacement



This month the city council passed a resolution requesting the county court refer a ballot measure to voters in November to replace our 62-year old Gleason Pool. The City has completed the design of a new facility at the 7th Street sports complex and we have secured nearly \$500,000 to begin construction of the basic infrastructure for this site. Additional grant funding is available, but it will require coordinated effort on the part of all our communities and the county to achieve. The final report for the new aquatic center is available on the city website (www.cityofjohnday.com) under "Latest News." We'd encourage you to read the report and contact the county to encourage them to refer this matter to the voters in

Grant County so we can continue to have a public swimming pool. Our City cannot afford to replace Gleason or operate a swimming pool on our own. This is an asset used by everyone in our region and if we're going to have a pool, the costs have to be shared equally among all its users – regardless of its location.

In August, our 25-year agreement with the Parks and Recreation District ends and Gleason Pool and Park will revert back to the City. Our intent is to permanently close the pool and sell the land to the state to build a new Kam Wah Chung interpretive center at this site. I hope we can work effectively with the other cities to replace the pool at a new location that will last the next 60 years.

Greenhouse Produce Now Available



Due to restaurant closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to look for other sources for the produce growing in the greenhouse. Last month, we decided to try selling directly to our residents through an online platform. You can now buy produce direct from the City at www.johndaygreenhouse.com. This site frequently offers discounts and promotions as excess produce becomes available. We continue to add new restaurants and businesses as customers and will also be offering produce at the Farmer's Market beginning this month. We have fresh herbs, four lettuce varieties, cucumbers and tomatoes. Our long-term goal is to create a facility where we can offer academic internships, meet local food security needs and promote hydroponic agriculture as a growth industry in John Day. We'd encourage you to check out our online store and learn more about this initiative on our website.



Innovation Gateway & BUILD Grant Update



Plans are proceeding for the construction of a new 50-room hotel and 250-person event center at the Innovation Gateway/former Oregon Pine mill site. The saw mill will be converted into an event center and the hotel will be built adjacent and connected to it on the west end of the property. The City is requesting funding from the Economic Development Administration, Federal Highway Administration BUILD grant, and other agencies to assist with the site development and street improvements to complete this project, including the restoration of the wetland habitat surrounding the existing buildings. The preliminary engineering and design plans for this site have been completed and we are preparing applications for the planning commission to review these projects prior to construction. With the completion of our local street network, these projects will create a 20-year supply of buildable residential, commercial and industrial lands in John Day.

The City intends to sell at least 12, one-acre parcels in this area for mixed use (commercial-industrial) development to private sector investors, including our own residents. If you are looking for a place to expand your business or are interested in purchasing property within this area, please contact city hall at (541) 575-0028 or by email at cityofjohnday@grantcounty-or.gov.

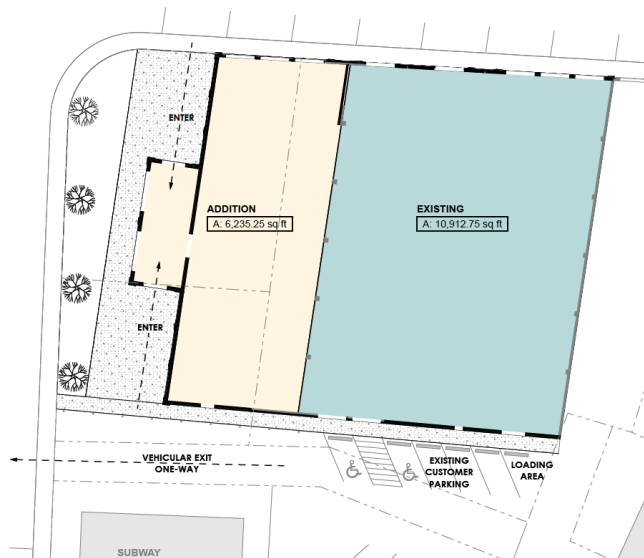


Renderings of the Innovation Gateway Area Plan at the former Oregon Pine mill site (top), new hotel and event center (bottom left), and proposed street improvements (bottom right).

New & Expanded Retail Options



The Planning Commission approved the plans for the Len's Drug expansion in April, and later this month will review an application for a new Dollar General in John Day. We are excited about these expanded retail opportunities in our community! The Dollar General (pictured above) is a 9,100 SF new build that will take place across from the NAPA Auto Parts at 700 W. Main Street. Len's will be adding over 6,000 SF of additional retail and pharmacy space with an improved entrance, structural enhancements and complete façade redesign (site plan below).



New Home Incentive Program

The City is offering 7 percent cash back on all new site-built homes in John Day and 15 percent cash back on major remodels. Twelve properties are currently participating in the program. If you are interested in making major home improvements or new site-built construction, please contact us for details on this program. We are actively looking for ways to promote these incentives to help widen our tax base and encourage economic recovery through new home construction and home improvements in our area. Visit the city website or contact us to learn more.

Integrated Park System – Next Steps



Construction of the Davis Creek Park and riverfront trail system is now complete and the next phase of the Integrated Park System is scheduled to begin next month. The City is working with the Parks & Recreation District to open a new parking area at the west end of 7th Street. Contracts for this project will be awarded in July and construction will begin in August. We will also begin construction of the new Hill Family Park and design for this riverfront recreation area at the north end of Canton Street. This park will be connected via a new bridge over the John Day River and by trails from there to the Davis Creek trailhead (just west of the Charolais Heights intersection, pictured above). These parks improvements were funded through a grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. We're excited to be able to offer these trail amenities to our residents and visitors. We will be adding additional trail networks along the riverfront as part of the demolition of the old wastewater treatment plant beginning in 2022.

Pulling Together

In spite of the economic challenges we're facing due to COVID-19, we're continuing to build and invest in our community. We are not going to let this virus beat us. Our community will continue to pull together, and our hope is that we will emerge stronger in the coming years.

We work for you, and we want to make sure we're meeting your needs as our residents. If you have questions about any city related projects or business, please email us at cityofjohnday@grantcounty-or.gov or call us at (541) 575-0028 and we'll schedule an appointment.

Thank you for staying engaged and informed!

Nick Green, City Manager