City Issues Parking Signs; Campaign to Assist Merchants

In less than 48 hours after the governor’s mandates on social distancing closed the dining rooms of local restaurants, the City of Grants Pass and local business leaders worked together to devise a campaign to provide immediate assistance to restauranteurs and business owners impacted by the new restrictions.

Under his authority as city manager, Aaron Cubic immediately authorized the implementation of temporary 15-minute take-out parking provisions and the creation of signs to be distributed to local restaurants for their use as they adapt to the ban of on-site dining.

Cubic put motion the full cooperation of the city’s business advocate and information coordinator to assist local restaurants and businesses with an aggressive campaign to inform the public of restaurants offering take-out and/or delivery services and adjusted operating hours of local retail and service outlets.

“The city wants to do what we can to support our local merchants during this unprecedented situation,” said Cubic. “Economic development and local business support has always been an important part of the services the city provides to our community.”

Cubic announced the programs to a small group of business owners at a meeting organized by downtown merchant Shannon Holder, who coordinates the Grants Pass Downtown Merchants social media group.

Holder is assisting with the compilation of lists of businesses and their adjusted hours for posting to a page on the city’s website. That information, paired with a list of local eateries with take-out options will be promoted through the city’s various messaging platforms, including email subscribers, social media, and the city’s monthly newsletter, GP Now.

“We are going to encourage residents to order take-out at least once per week, or as often as their budgets will allow them to help keep our restaurants alive. We hope that take-out diners will also continue to shop at our local outlets before and after picking up their meals,” said Information Coordinator Steven Sabel.

Sabel created a social media campaign for merchants to connect to with various hashtags and webpages to share and promote. Holder is creating special promotional campaigns for businesses to join, including a planned photo scavenger hunt that will ask patrons to visit a series of stores to take a picture of specific items in order to receive a coupon or free gift.

One suggestion for the giveaway item was a roll of toilet paper, “to make a little light of the situation,” said Holder.

The temporary take-out parking signs will remain in use until the social distancing mandates are lifted. New promotional campaigns and continued encouragement of residents to use restaurant take-out and delivery services will expand to small office groups who can order lunch to go.

“We are setting the example at City Hall with several departments working on systems to pool funds together to order lunch at least once per week. We are encouraging other offices (See “MERCHANT” page 12)

City Responds to Social Distancing Mandates

In response to new mandates from the state government regarding social distancing and restrictions on public gatherings, the City of Grants Pass has canceled some public meetings, postponed community forums, and enacted changes to the city council will be conducted.

“We are doing what we can to address the situation and mitigate the impact to reduce it to as little as possible in our community,” said Mayor Roy Lindsay.

Effective March 16, as mandated by the governor’s office, the city canceled all non-acceptable advisory committee meetings and planned community open forums and events. These included Coffee With A Cop March 19, Urban Growth Boundary Rezone Community Forum March 23, Dollar Mountain Trail Planning Meeting March 25, CDBG Public Workshop and Open House April 1, and Arbor Day Celebration April 6.

Many of these events will be rescheduled once the social restrictions are lifted.
Administration

Message From The Chief

We are GP!

The Grants Pass Department of Public Safety recognizes the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is impacting the City of Grants Pass.

Please be assured your Department of Public Safety will respond to all emergent calls as usual and are committed to providing quality emergency services to our community.

To minimize possible exposure and to protect essential emergency services personnel, we will be implementing temporary modifications to our call response and services. For example, patrol officers will handle non-priority calls via telephone whenever possible.

We will also monitor all medical calls to residential facilities and use AMR to verify the need for a fire unit. Furthermore, only essential building inspections will be conducted at this time.

We are committed to “Keeping Grants Pass Safe” to include keeping all essential public safety personnel healthy so they can deliver quality emergency services 24/7.

The Grants Pass Department of Public Safety thanks you for your support during this temporary modification in call response and services.

Although we do not have online police reporting available yet, we do offer several online forms which can be filled out and submitted online.

https://www.grantspassoregon.gov/566/Public-Safety-Forms

And as a reminder, you can always call, anytime, day or night. We are here to help you.

By Phone:
- Emergency: 911
- Non-Emergency:
  (541) 450-6260
  (541) 450-6200

Yours in service,
Chief Warren Hensman

GP Now
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Solving Problems

Adam Shults is GP’s Accounting Supervisor

Adam Shults first saw the opening for a position as accounting supervisor at Grants Pass City Hall, a quick conversation with his wife, Amanda, convinced him to apply for the job. Amanda, who likes to travel, had visited Oregon before, and she said she could fully support a move here, said Shults.

“It’s gorgeous here,” he said.

Participating in his first interview via Skype all the way from South Carolina, Shults said he knew immediately that he would accept the position if given the offer.

“My initial reaction was, everybody on this team had the culture of finding the best way to move forward. That’s the kind of team I want to be on,” said Shults.

It wasn’t long before he was on a plane to Oregon for a quick, one-day turnaround to participate in a second interview in person. He met the staff of the city’s Finance Department, assessed the department’s needs, and evaluated how things were working while overcoming the current vacancy.

“It was kudos to everybody who kept things running in absence of the former accounting supervisor,” said Shults.

“I wanted to find new solutions and processes to help make the team even more efficient. They liked me, and I guess they felt the same” he said.

Shults and his wife left South Carolina, and he started working for the City of Grants Pass in August 2018.

As the accounting supervisor, a major portion of Shults’ responsibilities include working with the city’s budget.

“The budget is the first, most important thing that Finance does, and my position oversees a lot of that,” he said. “It’s a process that never ends.”

From attempting to accurately estimate projected revenues to determining the level of service the city can support, “you really never stop the budget process throughout the year and into projections for the coming one, two, five years and beyond,” said Shults.

The city’s budget covers 50 different funds, 183 different departments and divisions, covering more than 300 active projects, involving input from more than 40 different people to prepare a 576-page document encompassing 7,766 active accounts.

See “SHULTS” page 11

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Typo Tally!

A wise old editor once said: “Typos are here for those who won’t be happy until they find one.”

Thousands of words composed of thousands of letters means we are bound to get a few out of place. Let us know when you find them!

Charmaine Coatney discovered “Cheif” on Page 6, and “yonger” on page 9.
Nathan Miller discovered an incorrect weblink on page 4.

Can you find any typos in this April issue? Email us to let us know, and we’ll thank you in print right here next month!
City Council Directs Discretionary Spending

At their workshop Monday, March 9, the Grants Pass City Council provided city staff with direction regarding how to best use roughly $2.4 million remaining in discretionary funds resulting from the sale of surplus property on River Road.

Approximately $1.1 million of the $3.5 million sale of the property must be used to pay off an interfund loan used to purchase Dollar Mountain according to council resolution.

Councilors heard presentations from Finance Director Jay Meredith and City Manager Aaron Cubic about the status of discretionary funds in the city’s General Fund, priority items identified through the council’s recent strategic planning sessions, and ongoing projects.

Meredith explained the city’s limited sources of discretionary funds in the amount of approximately $5.6 million generated through franchise fees, state revenue sharing, and business taxes. He also explained how those funds are typically used to subsidize city departments, “with very little left over,” he said.

“Next fiscal year and future years will be similar, if not a small deficit, so general fund resources are not available for strategic plan capital projects without changes to tax/fee structures or reductions somewhere in the General Fund budget,” said Meredith.

Meredith also identified additional revenue sources which can be used for capital projects, such as Urban Renewal Agency (URA) dollars, lodging taxes, and certain system development charges.

He completed his portion of the report by cautioning the council that one-time revenues such as sales of surplus properties “should not be used for operational expenses.”

Cubic’s portion of the presentation outlined how the $2.4 million could be applied to projects the council has identified as top priorities for the coming year. He began with the council’s “three-star” priority items in chronological order of how long the items have been in the council’s strategic plan.

“This is staff’s proposal of how we could potentially allocate those resources with regard to your strategic plan,” Cubic said.

He also identified items on the list which qualify for URA funding.

“We’d rather use Urban Renewal dollars whenever possible,” said Cubic.

Examples of URA-qualifying projects on the council’s list included sewer development in Spalding Park, ornamental lights along “H” and Fifth streets, blighted building removal, and a feasibility study to explore developing a convention center.

Staff recommendations for River Road property proceeds allocation included $700,000 to accommodate deferred park infrastructure priorities.

“We would take care of all of our preventative park maintenance issues,” said Cubic.

“We have a 20, 30, 40-year-old park infrastructure that is coming to the end of its useful life,” added Meredith.

Additional recommendations for covering “three-star” items included $250,000 to complete Beacon Hill park; $485,000 to complete phase one trail de-

(See “PROCEEDS” page 10)

Features

Stepping Up For The Cause

Contestants representing eight local charitable organizations will take to the stage at the Grants Pass Performing Arts Center to dance their way into the hearts and wallets of donors when the Grants Pass Museum of Art presents the second annual Dancing With the Grants Pass Stars.

The event is designed to help the participating organizations raise funds through their donor base, while also generating proceeds for the art museum’s program providing field trips to the museum for local fifth grade students.

The event was originally planned for Saturday, May 16, but due to social distancing mandates this month, the event has been postponed, with a tentative date of Sept. 12, said Hyla Lipson, executive director of the museum.

Last year, the event raised a combined $35,000 for the museum and eight participating nonprofits, said Lipson.

The event is facilitated by the Utah Ballroom Dance Company out of Portland. Not unlike the famous television program format, Dancing With the Grants Pass Stars pairs each local contestant with a professional dancer from the Portland company. Their dancers come from across the country, and the organization travels from state to state to assist nonprofits with coordinating similar fundraisers, said Lipson.

“They bring their own lights, sound, and costumes,” she said.

This year’s participating charities include College Dreams, Crossing Bridges, Dolly Parton Imagination Library, Foundry Village, Josephine County Youth Foundation, Sleep in Heavenly Peace, Women’s Crisis Support Team, and Zonta.

Contestant representatives are selected by the participating organizations with consideration of their popularity and sphere of influence. The goal of each nonprofit is to “pack the PAC with attendees,” said Lipson.

“It’s great because it’s a dedicated audience,” Lipson said.

The professional dancers arrive one week prior to the event. A special meet-and-greet assessment session is conducted between the professional dancers and the local contestants.

Producers of the show pair up each contest with a dancer before selecting dance style and music for the duo to present at the show.

Dance duos meet for rehearsal one hour per day for five days. A dress rehearsal is held in the afternoon prior to the performance, and then the big night ensues.

Each duo performs their dance during the first half of the presentation. Video clips of rehearsals and interviews of the dancers are played in between performances. This year’s judges are the honorable Lindi Baker, Chris Mecca, and Trixie Diamond.

Each nonprofit sets up a table in the lobby to facilitate the selling of votes for their dancer in order to raise funds for the organization. Each vote costs a dollar.

“What we’re trying to do is help them help themselves,” said Lipson.

Some of the participating organizations parlay the event into further success through increased donor outreach, VIP (See “STARS” page 11)
Burn Window Open
April 25 - May 3

The Spring 2020 Burn Window has been scheduled April 25 through May 3, subject to change due to weather conditions.

Blackberry brambles, leaves, and other yard debris may be burned during the open burn window. With the recent change in recycling, please note the burning of cardboard and paper is strictly prohibited.

Never burn the following materials:
- Rubber and plastic products.
- Tires (includes burning tires to start an approved agricultural waste fire).
- Wet garbage.
- Petroleum and petroleum-treated materials.
- Asphalt or industrial waste.
- Any material that creates dense smoke or noxious odors.

It is against the law to conduct any open burning that:
- Unreasonably interferes with enjoyment of life or property.
- Creates a public or private nuisance.
- Creates a hazard to public safety.

Always be sure to have proper tools such as steel rakes and shovels nearby. Always a hose and nozzle nearby.

Make sure that all fires are properly supervised and extinguished.

Burn Permits
Open burning within city limits requires a permit, which costs $10 and is available from the Parkway Public Safety Center, 800 E. Park St. Permits go on sale April 22.

Permits will be sold 8 a.m. to noon, and 1-5 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. The office is closed at noon for lunch.

The $10 permit is only good for nine consecutive days from date of issue. No refunds will be issued for unused permits.

For additional information, call the Fire Prevention Division at (541)450-6200, or Josephine County Burn Line: (541)476-9663, ext. 3.

Regardless of the fear of making ends meet on their own, Howell said his wife told him: “If you’re unhappy, do what’s going to make you happy.”

“We’ve been through a lot together, and she knew we would succeed,” said Howell.

In September of last year, they celebrated the one-year milestone of A&S Cleaning. In January, they were awarded the Grants Pass Chamber of Commerce Rising Star Award at the chamber’s annual banquet.

“I had no clue what it was. I had never been to a banquet or anything,” said Howell.

“I called a fellow chamber member who was a past nominee, and asked what I should be prepared for,” he said.

When it came time to accept the award, Shayna told Adam he had to be the one to go to the podium and speak.

“It was really nice to be recognized and have the community see what we’re doing not go unnoticed,” he said.

At the start, they didn’t have a single job lined up. Howell went to the Small Business Development Center, and they helped him obtain his contractor’s license, as well as develop his business model.

“They pushed me 100 percent,” said Howell.

Next, he contacted a friend in graphic design to create a logo, contacted the chamber, and started promoting the new brand through social media and direct contact.

“We let everyone know what we were doing, and had a ton of support from the community,” Howell said.

“We just went all in. It was sink or swim,” he said.

Clean Start For Rising Star

When Adam Howell decided it was time to start his own cleaning business, he “had nothing” but his nine years of experience in the industry and the desire to branch out on his own.

“I just made the leap and went for it,” said Howell.

With the support and encouragement of his wife, Shayna, Howell braved what he describes as “the financial scare of making the leap.”

“I wanted to be sure I could support my family,” he said.

Married now for 13 years, the Howells have three children, ages 11, 8, and 2.

Recycling in the Grants Pass Area

Republic Services: (541)479-3371
Josephine County Recycle and Transfer Station, 1749 Merlin Road, Grants Pass

Southern Oregon Sanitation: (541)479-5335
Recycling Depot, 1381 Redwood Ave., Grants Pass
Transfer Station, 905 Kerby Mainline Road, Kerby

Non-Recyclable Materials:
Take non-recyclable materials to the transfer stations.

Toxic and Hazardous Waste:
Collection events for commercial and residential toxic and hazardous waste are held twice per year.

Yard Waste:
Recycle yard waste in your curbside yard waste cart, or take it to a transfer station for a fee.
Council Initiates Eminent Domain for New Water Treatment Plant

The Grants Pass City Council voted to file a lawsuit for condemnation to move forward with construction of a new water treatment plant on 9.97 acres located near the intersection of SE “J” St. and SE Mill St., after the council was informed that current negotiations for the property have come to a standstill.

The city has offered to purchase the property for $2,606,000, which is the appraised value of the portion of the property that the city seeks to acquire.

The need for the new plant was established in 2014 after a citizen advisory committee conducted a two-year evaluation of the aging condition of the existing plant and determined repairs to the plant were no longer an option. Built in 1931, the existing plant on “M” Street is quickly degrading after nearly 80 years of continual use.

During the evaluation process the committee studied five total alternatives, using a triple bottom line analysis, including the cost to the community, benefit to the community, and potential environmental benefits of each option. Ultimately the decision to build a new plant on a new site sparked a search of viable locations to begin construction.

In the end, the site at 695 SE “J” St. was determined to best suit the location criteria, while also representing the best economical option with regards to proximity to the existing water intake, required footprint of the new plant, and plans for future expansion to keep up with impending growth.

Today, the city provides an average of 5.5 million gallons of water per day to more than 12,000 connections serving more than 35,000 people. That translates to roughly 3,500 gallons per minute 24 hours per day, seven days per week to meet average demand. Seismic or operational failure of the existing plant would leave the city left to function with only 2-3 days of stored water.

In December 2016, the city council directed city staff to initiate negotiations with the property owners at 695 SE “J” St. to purchase the property.

Appraisers were hired and the property owners granted access to the property for consideration, but a proposed purchase agreement for a portion of the property was rejected, and negotiations continued.

As a result of those ongoing negotiations, city staff then made further recommendations to adjust the amount of land to be purchased from the property owners to include the entire 16.94-acre parcel in order to move the sale forward. That offer was then also rejected.

After more than two years of back-and-forth discussions, councilors ultimately adopted a resolution declaring a public need for the property March 20, 2019.

As negotiations continued, city staff made further recommendations to reduce the amount of land required from the property owners to complete the project, while still allowing the property owners to maintain their current business operations, and a new resolution declaring need for only 9.97 acres of the east side of the property was adopted Jan. 15, 2020.

During this process, cost estimates for completing the new water plant have continued to increase due to inflation, consumer price indexing, and the costs of materials. Projected costs established in 2015 of just under $50 million have compounded at a rate of roughly five percent per year to more than $80 million.

On March 2, council authorized and directed staff to file a lawsuit for condemnation of the property on March 23, when the most recent 40-day offer period matures. Additionally, the council authorized and directed that a contemporaneous motion for early possession also be filed, with an expected possession date of June 30.

Proceedings to acquire property under eminent domain are referred to as "condemnation" proceedings. The process is the exercise of the power of government to acquire private property necessary for public use on the payment of just compensation and following due process of law.

Eminent domain authority is one of the strongest powers given to government, and it is government’s responsibility to use it with extreme care and caution.

Fairness to the property owner is a key part to the utilization of eminent domain. Commitment to the retention of the business at the property to continue operations remains a key part of the planning process.

The council also agreed that city representatives will be available for continued negotiations, including willingness to enter mediation with the property owners in an effort to resolve this matter without the expense of litigation.
No Bones About It:
Hillcrest Station Needs a Makeover

The city’s Hillcrest Public Safety Station is “one of the most seismically stable buildings in the city’s inventory,” said Fire/Rescue Deputy Chief Lang Johnson.

In 2015, the city obtained a $450,000 grant from the state to seismically retrofit the 48-year-old building. Built in 1971, the station’s original construction included concrete tilt-up walls put in place with very little seismic standards at the time, said Johnson.

The exterior improvement addressed the strength and stability of the exterior of the building, but no interior renovations could be completed with the grant dollars. That has become a real problem, he said.

“It’s worn and dated, and we have a responsibility to provide a safe and proper workspace for our employees,” said Johnson.

A planned $250,000 allotment of discretionary funds to work at the station (see subsequent story this issue) is aimed at addressing some of those immediate needs, including renovations to the station’s dormitory, restroom, and kitchen facilities. Firefighters live at the station, and use those shared facilities 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

In addition to issues with their age, the shared dormitory and restroom facilities built in 1971 were not created with cohabitation of separate genders in mind.

“The industry has changed significantly since then,” Johnson said.

In 2017, the department commissioned a design and engineering plan for cost estimates to renovate the entire station. Those numbers came in at well over $10 million, said Johnson.

“Doing a major remodel is expensive,” he said.

When seismic reports and facility analysis was completed on the aging county building where Department of Public Safety services are headquartered, it became evident that Hillcrest Station would have to wait until after a new Public Safety Center could be built.

“You have to prioritize, and the main Public Safety Center had to take priority,” said Johnson.

“The bones of the building are solid and good.”

Nonetheless, Hillcrest Station isn’t getting any younger, and needs there continue to grow.

“It needs to be done,” said Johnson.

The complete remodel of the station will include important security upgrades to protect operations there, and the installation of a sprinkler system for suppression, not considered a priority in a fire station in 1971.

“Obviously a building that old, you also have problems with old sewer and water systems. The aging HVAC system is also a drain on efficiency,” Johnson said.

Adjustments to the design work moving forward will help prioritize the remaining phases of the renovations into the future.

“The bones of the building are solid and good,” said Johnson, but it’s important to provide a “healthy and effective workspace.

“Good infrastructure is an essential part of the quality of the (See “STATION” page 10)

Welcome Maro to the DPS Team

Grants Pass Department of Public Safety officer Jeff Craven used to drive patrol in Arizona on single-officer car assignment. When Craven moved to Grants Pass in 2013, he first had a similar assignment here.

“That’s not the case anymore,” said Craven, who received his new partner Jan. 5.

“Now I have someone to talk to – someone who goes on calls with me,” he said.

Craven’s partner, Maro, is one of the newest members of the Grants Pass law enforcement team. The 2-year-old Belgian Malinois, born in the Ukraine, and shipped to Grants Pass via Slovakia, is a specially-trained apprehension dog in the city’s K-9 team.

“There are a few spots in Europe where these dogs are specially bred and start their training,” said Craven.

The Belgian Malinois has become the most popular breed of dog for use in law enforcement and military operations throughout the world. Their high drive and high energy helps them “overcome obstacles to get to where they need to be,” Craven said.

“You have to have a dog who is willing to follow where the work leads,” he said, adding that it is not uncommon for the dog to need to pursue a suspect through blackberries, mud, water, and confined spaces.

Once Maro arrived, he was assigned to Craven and the two began their initial academy training. The six-week program focused on learning, bonding, and training together as a team.

“It is very important to establish a relationship with the dog,” said Craven.

A portion of the initial few weeks includes a series of medical tests to ensure the dog is physically fit and a viable investment for the city. An earlier dog sent to fill Maro’s post had to be forwarded to a different agency as a drug detection dog due to some problems with his hips.

Grants Pass already has a drug detection dog named, Match. A 4-year-old German shorthaired pointer, Match is assigned to officer George Gasperson, and was put into service in December 2017.

As one of the only such specially-trained dogs in the region, “he gets a lot of use in interagency work,” said Craven.

Grants Pass has had two apprehension dogs on duty for the past 10 years. The other K-9 team is officer Jeff Gaunt and 10-year-old, Brock, another Belgian Malinois.

The three teams train together at least four hours per week at the Vince and Nancy DeAmicis Memorial K-9 Training Field at Redwood Public Safety Station. Sometimes they are joined by K-9 units from nearby Medford and other law enforcement agencies.

Regular training consists of obedience, article work, tracking, and area searches, Craven said.

Obedience work is important because you need “a dog who can be out there in the public, be around other people, and work with other officers. They need to know that not everyone out there is a bad guy,” he said.

Article work focuses on items such as drugs or weapons that suspects may discard during a pursuit which may serve as evidence in a case.

Tracking involves tracing a scent to locate a suspect or missing person, and searches of both indoor and outdoor locations are important “once you have tracked a scent to a confined space,” said Craven.

When training time is completed, there is a lot of dog play involved to keep the dogs interested in the training activities.

“The dog has to want to work, and he will if he thinks it’s fun,” Craven said.

As the human component of K-9 teams, “handlers” receive special training as well. Most handlers begin as “agitators,” who often don special suits and serve as mock perpetrators to help with dog training. Craven served as an agitator for three years before becoming a handler.

Part of the importance of that training is to provide handlers with an on-the-job understanding. (See “K-9” page 12)
GP is Oregon’s Tree City of the Year

Since 1994, Oregon Community Trees (OCT) and the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) have publicly recognized individuals, communities, and organizations in the state who demonstrate outstanding accomplishments and leadership in urban and community forestry.

This year, OCT and the ODF have selected the City of Grants Pass from the state’s 67 Tree City USA communities as the Oregon Tree City of the Year. The special recognition will officially be presented to the city at a future city council meeting.

“The annual Oregon Urban & Community Forestry Awards Program celebrates Oregonians who understand that healthy urban and community forests foster thriving communities,” said Samantha Wolf, president of Oregon Community Trees.

Only Oregon cities that hold in good standing the national Arbor Day Foundation status, Tree City USA, are considered for this special Oregon Urban & Community Forestry Award.

“Over the past 32 years, the City of Grants Pass has grown their urban forestry program. The City of Grants Pass has shown that it is dedicated to being a steward of their urban forest and to the development of a diverse, healthy tree canopy throughout its city limits,” said Wolf.

This year, the city achieved its ninth Tree City USA Growth Award. With the achievement of one more Growth Award, the city will reach Sterling Tree City USA status.

“The City’s actions provide a great example of Urban and Community Forestry leadership that exists in our state,” Wolf said.

City employees, Chad Westbrook, certified arborist, and Tony Mecum, urban forester, were instrumental in the city’s achievement, said Parks Superintendent Wendy Giordano.

“Special thanks to Chad Westbrook and Tony Mecum for their excellent work promoting, protecting, and maintaining our urban forest,” Giordano said.

The City of Grants Pass Advisory Committee voted unanimously at their meeting March 12 to support the city council’s intent to apply $50,000 of discretionary funding to conduct a feasibility study regarding the future of Caveman Pool.

Committee members and city councilors recently toured the aging facility to determine the immediate needs for operating the pool for the summer season.

At their February meeting, committee members voted against patching and repairing the existing pool as it would only serve as “a costly band aid,” they said.

Committee recommendations included keeping the pool maintained within the limits of current budget appropriations for as long as possible while the process of a feasibility study can move forward.

The proposed study will examine several options for the future of the pool, including rebuilding a new facility at the current site, building a similar facility at a new site, or building a larger indoor aquatic center at a new site.

Committee members want to seek input from various stakeholders and potential partners, as well as members of the community regarding needs, expectations, and support for various options.

Ultimately, more detailed options will be presented to the public for input and feedback. In the meantime, the committee has asked city staff to provide a report at their next meeting regarding the continuing costs of maintenance at the facility.

Saving our Giant Sequoia

A project to install a new playground at Lawnridge Park started recently. Old play structures were removed, and excavation of the site was initiated.

The new play surface will include rubberized tiles, calling for the removal of all existing materials and soil down to the depth of approximately 18 inches in order to accommodate the rock and concrete base.

Where the trucks and equipment are driving in and out of the site, city staff are working together with the contractor using rubberized mats on top of wood chips to help prevent damage and compaction to the lawn and tree roots.

While the contractor was excavating, workers discovered a mass of roots from the Giant Sequoia tree adjacent to the playground.

In effort to reduce the impact to the Sequoia, our urban forest team used an air spade to clean soil from the roots improving ability to inspect the root system.

Once the soil was removed, the team found a main connecting root that was carefully cut out. Cutting the root with a clean edge, rather than the potential ripping out which could have occurred with the heavy machine excavator reduced the risk of damage to the tree.

“We want to preserve this beautiful tree for the enjoyment of generations to come,” said Parks Superintendent Wendy Giordano.
Council Emphasizes Importance of Public Information on WTP

The recent city council decision to move forward with acquisition of a 9.97-acre site for construction of a new Water Treatment Plant (WTP) calls for regular and timely information to the public about the process ahead.

Replacement of the old treatment plant in a cost-effective and expedient manner is the immediate priority and given the WTP replacement project represents a significant rate-payer-funded investment, it is important that citizens remain informed.

The city council has long emphasized the need for ongoing communications with the public about the importance of the WTP project.

“Letting people know their money is going to good use is just good government and common sense,” said Mayor Roy Lindsay.

In response to city council direction, city staff has recently refreshed and updated the Water Treatment section of the city’s website. The landing page of that section lists the services provided by the utility. It also provides daily updates on water consumption and Rogue River levels, flows, turbidity, and temperature.

There is even a link to the live Daily Courier Cam located on the Rogue River near Grants Pass Parkway, looking down at the river from the city’s water filtration plant across from Baker Park. The cam is one of five live feeds supplied by the Daily Courier from various positions throughout the city. Together, the five cams receive more than 200,000 views per year.

On the main Water Utility page there are links in the box on the left-hand side of the page where site visitors can learn more about bulk water, low-water-use gardening, useful water links, water distribution, water documents, water treatment, water quality reports, water standard drawings, water service installation, the value of water, and water conservation tips.

Additional updates to the website provide additional information about the history of the 89-year-old Grants Pass WTP, and the next steps in the process of the Water Treatment Plant Replacement Project.

People have lived in the Rogue River watershed for at least 8,500 years. In addition to providing world-famous white-water recreation and fishing, water from the Rogue River has supplied the City of Grants Pass with its drinking water since 1888.

Today, the existing plant built in 1931, is among the oldest operating treatment facilities in the state of Oregon. The history section of the website also features a timeline (see sidebar) outlining water treatment activity from 1931 to present day, and into the future.

The WTP Replacement Project section of the website will continue to be updated periodically with new project information as it is available. The most recent update describes the city’s Jan. 15 decision to acquire the property needed near the intersection of SE “I” Street and SE Mill Street to build the new plant. It also explains that replacing the existing plant has been a city council top priority for a number of years.

With staff continuing to work with property owners about moving forward with this important project, construction could begin as early as 2021. Testing for hazardous materials left behind by previous uses has already occurred and plans to remove any problems are already in place. Heavy equipment will eventually move in to clear the site for construction, with the goal of the new WTP to be producing high-quality drinking water by the winter of 2023.

Public Works Director Jason Canady has set a goal to provide regular updates, at least every 4-6 weeks, until the new WTP is operational.

Updates on construction progress can be found on the website, here in the pages of GP Now, City Manager Weekly Reports, and the city’s social media accounts.

Take a Tour of the WTP

Members of the public are invited to tour the city’s Water Treatment Plant to see firsthand how the historic facility operates.

To schedule a tour, submit a tour request form to the Public Works Department a minimum of five business days in advance of requested tour date.

Forms are located online: www.grantspassoregon.gov/354/Water
All visitors must present valid picture ID (driver’s license, state-issued ID or passport). Children need to be accompanied by an adult before gaining access to tour site.

Send the completed form to the Public Works Office, 101 NW A St., Rm 205, Grants Pass, OR, or fax to: (541)479-6765, or email: dphelan@grantspassoregon.gov

The city’s aging Water Treatment Plant was built in 1931.

132 Years of Water

The history of drinking water in Grants Pass dates back to 1888

People have lived in the Rogue River watershed for at least 8,500 years.

Water from the river has supplied the City of Grants Pass with its drinking water since 1888. A company called the Grants Pass Water, Light and Power Company was formed in 1893 for the purpose of operating a powerhouse on the river and eventually supplying the city with water, gas, and electricity.

Between 1888 and 1889, a dam was constructed across the river a half-mile west of 6th Street to divert the water from the south bank to a powerhouse located on the north bank. In 1900 and 1901, extensive work improved the dam; however, it would still wash out and then need to be rebuilt.

Early 20th Century

In 1906, the Rogue River Water Company purchased the water system. At that time water was pumped directly from the river and treated with chlorine. It needed to be filtered to make it clear and pleasant tasting.

The powerhouse was operated until July of 1907 when a new pump station was installed 3,000 feet upstream from the 6th Street Bridge.

In 1931, the City of Grants Pass purchased and began operating the water system, and construction began of the current Water Treatment Plant and a reservoir.

New Century

Today, water from the treatment plant is pumped by 13 remote booster-pumping stations and stored in eight reservoirs located throughout the city.

This distribution system is made up of five distinct pressure zones that change as elevation increases and covers the entire city, Urban Growth Boundary, and areas around the Merlin landfill and North Valley industrial complex.

Liquid chlorine is added at strategic points in the distribution system to maintain the chlorine residual that is mandated by the Oregon Health Authority - Drinking Water Program and Federal Guidelines.

High water quality is ensured through continuous monitoring and by bacterial, chemical, and radiological tests taken daily from numerous sites throughout the distribution system.

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The Signs of Success

Fiery Brown and Cavern Clay may not be the names that jump out at you when you drive past El Molcajete, but those are the colors of the newly painted exterior of the popular restaurant at 201 E. Park St., across from Riverside Park and so visible to cars crossing the 7th Street Bridge.

The Mexican eatery received a recent facelift and new signage in an exterior remodel business owner Mariela Hernandez says was long overdue.

Hernandez and her husband, Rosalio Perete, purchased the business in 2017. She was a dental assistant with five years at a Medford dental office, and he was a cook of 20 years who always wanted to own his own restaurant, said Hernandez.

“My husband’s dream was to own a restaurant,” she said.

When they assumed control of the business, it was already established for a couple of years, but things were in dire need of cleaning, renovation, and rehabilitation, said Hernandez.

“It was a mess,” Hernandez said.

While she continued to work at her dental job for the first five months of their new lives as restauranteurs, the couple strived to clean up the interior of the restaurant, using their holiday vacations and every spare hour to renovate the kitchen and the bathrooms, touch up the interior paint, and get things functioning the way they wanted them to be.

“It was very stressful. Working with your husband full time, 24-hours a day, isn’t easy,” said Hernandez.

Nonetheless, they were greeted by a loyal patron base that was immediately supportive of the positive changes to the restaurant, including Perete’s new menu items, Hernandez said.

“He way of cooking things was not the same. Customers started noticing the improved food quality and service,” she said.

New menu items added to the offerings included more vegetarian options, additional seafood entrees, and Perete’s signature Molcajete Ranchero, a stone pot dish (a molcajete) featuring a mixture of shrimp, chicken, beef and chorizo.

Business really booms during special events at Riverside Park such as the annual Boatnik weekend, when Hernandez and her employees staff the restaurant from 9 a.m. to midnight for four straight days.

“Oh, gosh! It’s insane. The second and third day you’re ready to drop,” said Hernandez.

In addition to her regular staff, she said she calls upon friends who come in to work just for that weekend to help out.

“It’s a lot of regular customers, and a lot of new customers,” often resulting in a line of people waiting to be seated, she said.

“Some people are willing to wait because they know the quality of the food,” said Hernandez.

Added horse racing dates at Grants Pass Downs has increased her business as well, said Hernandez.

“When the horses are running, it gets very busy. Especially Sundays after the races are over. It brings a lot of new people from northern Oregon and California,” she said.

That made the timing of the building’s exterior renovations current chair of the committee, and Larry Evans serves as vice chair. Additional members include Cal Kenney, Cynthia Charat, Michelle O’Brien, Michael Holzinger, Deanna Morse, Robyn Lofing-Dean, and Dennis Hatch. Grants Pass Business Advocate Susan See-reiter serves as staff liaison to the committee, and Councilor Valerie Lovelace is the council liaison.

Modes of Acquisition

The committee uses a wide array of methods to secure public art for Grants Pass - depending upon the particular needs of the project. These include open call solicitations of art from the public, art solicited from a roster of artists with specialized skills, invitations sent to a limited number of artists or known artists, and appropriate art pieces donated to the city.

In cases where funds are available for specific art projects, the committee may pay for a project, or purchase a piece that already exists, for the public.

Permanent or Temporary

The committee determines the length of time any public art will be displayed when the work is selected or commissioned. All selected public art is cataloged and documented. The records are maintained under the guidance of the committee.

Selection Criteria

Public art is selected on the basis of many factors, including artistic merit (concept, design, craftsmanship), context (architectural, historic, geographic, cultural), design (considers and will improve the space that it will occupy), educational potential (capacity to increase (See “CoPA” page 10)
City Declares Emergency

The Grants Pass City Council adopted a resolution declaring a state of emergency at their special city council meeting Monday, March 23.

The resolution is a “precautionary measure to provide the city with increased flexibility in terms of resources, purchasing, and emergency response options,” said City Manager Aaron Cubic.

Cubic said the resolution is not a declaration of a public health emergency, as that is not the city’s role, but rather an action to “enable the city and staff to be in the best position to serve the community where needed most.”

“All essential city services will continue uninterrupted. We don’t see any change in that,” said Cubic.

Public walk-in traffic at all city offices has been suspended during state mandated social distancing restrictions. The public will still be served where necessary at the city’s main Public Safety Station. Community Development Department services will be available by appointment only.

Parks and trails will remain accessible so that the public can have an “opportunity to enjoy open space and trail systems,” Cubic said.

Park facilities such as restrooms, play structures, ball fields, athletic courts, and rental facilities will be closed.

City calendars will be kept current on the city’s website, but all city advisory committee meetings will be canceled until further notice. City council meetings will be scheduled to reduce frequency and duration based on pertinent business only. Social distancing parameters will be followed at all necessary meetings.

The Urban Area Planning Commission and Historical Buildings and Sites Commission will meet when necessary to process any required land use applications. Members will be encouraged to attend meetings online or by telephone when possible.

“Our team mentality will prevail through these extraordinary times and this same team approach will allow us to recover together,” said Cubic.

Additional information is available at the city’s website: www.grantspassoregon.gov, or by phone at (541)450-6000.

Mandates... (from page 1)

Gathering ban has been lifted, and new calendar dates can be selected.

“This is an unprecedented situation, but our community is strong, and we always come together in times of adversity,” Lindsay said.

During the restricted period, the council removed the general public comment portion of city council business meetings.

Those who do not have direct business with the city council are encouraged to share their views or input through email, phone calls, or letters to their councilors.

The arrangement of chairs in the Council Chamber will be structured to provide at least three feet of distance between them.

Meetings will remain available for live viewing from home on channel 183, or streamed online through the city’s website.

“With this situation, our community needs to find ways to come together without actually being together,” said Lindsay.

Station... (from page 6)

CoPA... (from page 9)

the public’s understanding and appreciation of art, maintainability (structural and surface soundness, durability and resistance to weathering, excessive maintenance/repair costs), diversity (artworks from artists of diverse cultures, geographic areas, races and gender, of varied scale and media, exploratory and well-established art forms), public safety (meets appropriate city codes and regulations, and has been designed and engineered by the artist in such a way that it will not create injuries while on display), accessibility (no fees or other limits prohibit the public from enjoying the artwork), feasibility (the artist’s ability to complete the work on time as conceived using the planned materials and within the approved budget), originality (edition of one, or part of a limited collection), artist’s proven ability to collaborate with design professionals when design team opportunities exist, and artist’s willingness to collaborate with other city-endorse committees in completing the project.

Applications to place public art are available at the city’s website: granstpassoregon.gov/684/committee-on-public-art-CoPA.

Proceeds... (from page 3)

development at Dollar Mountain; $450,000 to begin work at Caveman Pool; and $100,000 to install additional security cameras at existing parks.

“A number of your ‘three-star’ items would be complete,” Cubic said.

He then outlined “two-star” items identified in the council’s strategic plan which could be addressed with the remaining funds. Those items included $250,000 to refurbish the city’s gathering Hillcrest Public Safety Station (see subsequent story this issue); $75,000 to upgrade and repurpose Westholm Park; $80,000 to install a bike pump track at Beacon Hill Park; and $10,000 to establish an art facilities program.

“Luckily, we have already done the hard work through strategic planning, and we have a road map of where we’re going,” said Cubic.
Stars... (from page 3)

pre-parties, reserved seating sections, and celebration after parties, she said.

“The whole idea is to have people have fun. Everyone who came (last year) had a good time,” said Lipson. More than 400 people attended last year’s event.

After intermission, the second half of the presentation is a performance by the professional dancers, featuring ballroom styles, and some jazz and modern dance.

Grants Pass High School Culinary Arts provides concessions in the lobby. Tickets are $25 per person, available at the museum, online, or through the participating organizations. Each nonprofit is asked to sell at least 25 tickets to benefit the museum’s fifth grade field trips.

Fifth Graders at the Museum

Three days per week, February through May, the Grants Pass Museum of Art hosts fifth grade field trips to the museum. The $20,000 annual program provides children with a presentation on art history, exposure to art and its various forms, art activities, and free art supplies to take home, said Lipson.

“We teach them that art is communication. You see what the artist saw,” Lipson said.

Approximately 600 students participate in the program each year.

“It helps supplement the reduction of art in our schools,” said Lipson.

Hands-on activities include learning about the color wheel and creating a piece of art using dot matrixes to color a chameleon.

The museum also pays for the buses to carry the students back and forth, to and from the museum. Some teachers make further use of the bus to extend the day for their students to include a picnic lunch and visits to other locations such as the nearby Glass Forge and Oregon Futbol Academy, she said.

The goal is to continue to host Dancing With the Grants Pass Stars “year after year” as an annual fundraiser for local nonprofits and the museum, said Lipson.

After 41 years of continuous operation, it is important for the museum to continue to find ways to raise necessary funds for operations and programs, she said.

“The struggle to stay alive is real,” said Lipson.

In the summer, the patio is very popular, and keeps the employees busy during extended dining hours.

“What is really important for me is how important the employees I have are to me. It’s like a blessing to have people I can call and know they are going to be here. They are a big part of your business,” said Hernandez.

Currently 13 employees staff the kitchen, server stations, and the hosting station. Most of the employees work in the kitchen, because everything is done from scratch down to chopping the lettuce, she said.

Shults... (from page 2)

counts.

“You have to disperse all of the information to all of the stakeholders, and then get the information back. That’s thousands of pieces of information back and forth,” he said.

An extensive series of checklists is used to verify that all the information is in place, and that each piece connects appropriately.

“To create a cohesive and accurate document with input from 40 different people takes an enormous amount of effort every year,” said Shults.

Resources must always match requirements with the overall goal of “trying to maintain a healthy financial position. Whatever debts we have, we have to be able to support with appropriate collateral or solid revenue streams,” he said.

The challenge isn’t easy, but finding solutions to problems and making improvements is his favorite part of the job.

“We are always seeking the best way, and if it’s not the best way, we make changes to make it better. We spend less to do the same, or do more at the same cost to provide better services and overall quality of life to our community,” Shults said.

“Nobody ever asks the city council to stop providing services. They always want more, and that’s what we’re trying to make possible,” he said.

One key area of change that has occurred during his tenure with the city involves more efficient use of technology within the department.

“Employees spend less time entering the data and more time working with the data to understand it and the benefit it has to the rest of the team and the community,” said Shults.

“We evaluate opportunities for growth, savings, and things we can’t avoid due to the legal processes, such as PERS (Public Employees Retirement System). We have no control over PERS,” Shults said.

“All of this has to be analyzed so we can recommend how to move forward,” he said.

After the Finance Department prepares nearly 600 pages of recommended budget, the document goes through another two levels of approval, including the city’s Budget Committee, and ultimately the city council.

“The level of detail can be overwhelming for most people, but that’s where I live – in the details of those accounts,” said Shults.

He made the decision to get into finance and accounting when he was 14, after a family financial advisor visited his parents.

“I always loved math, and this seemed like the best use for that passion. It was just fascinating to me,” he said.

Ultimately a life of scrambling to find clients as a financial planner was not nearly as appealing as it seemed, and he landed a job working in the mortgage department of a local bank as a financial analyst.

“That’s where I fell in love with problem solving,” Shults said.

He eventually moved into government finance. That’s when he said there was a real shift in his view from “I have to go to work,” to “I get to go and solve problems,” he said.

At home, he is working on obtaining his Certified Public Accountant (CPA) status. With one out of four required exams now under his belt, he has less than 18 months to complete the rest of his certification.

He spends between three and four hours per day on average, “actively, constantly studying,” said Shults.

“I want to be a valuable member of this community,” he said.

Signs... (from page 9)

of crucial importance to her.

“This year, my husband said, ‘the interior looks good. Let’s do the outside now,’” Hernandez said.

She said finding the time and hoping for good weather was the most difficult part of the project, which included all new exterior paint, three illuminated wall signs, a new main sign on the exterior pole, and new light-up lettering. Upgrades to LED lighting were also completed to save energy.

Changing the exterior colors from the previous orange and yellow was an imperative aspect of the project, but “it was hard to choose the new colors,” said Hernandez.

Ultimately, the painter assisted in the choices by explaining the “latest” color trends, she said. Fiery Brown and Cavern Clay were the winners.

“My husband’s dream was to own a restaurant.”

Next on the renovation agenda for El Molcajete is their outdoor patio, with plans for a new awning and patio tile, said Hernandez.

EDITOR’S NOTE: During mandatory social-distancing restrictions on restaurants, El Molcajete is one of more than 40 restaurants in Grants Pass offering take-out dining options for their customers (see list on page 12).
K-9... (from page 6)

For that reason, officers in the K-9 unit need to rely on (Maro)," said Craven.

There are also several steps in the interview process designed to make sure officers understand the full commitment they are making.

“It’s not like the neighbors can come over and take care of (Maro),” said Craven.

For that reason, officers in the K-9 unit need to rely on each other to look out for each other and each other’s dogs when necessary, even during family getaways, he said.

“My career in law enforcement became a 24-hour duty of on-call status,” Craven said.

Part of that duty is making sure the dog isn’t too hot or too cold, keeping up with scheduled feeding times, providing the dog with exercise, and regular training opportunities.

“It is incumbent on me to train him a little every day,” said Craven.

When working the late shift, it is common for the two of them to use a city park as a training opportunity, he said. Varying the training environment helps keep the dogs challenged.

“We used to use the old hospital a lot,” Craven said.

Fort Vannoy Farms has allowed them to come out and train on their property as well.

“They were very welcoming to have us come out and use their property,” said Craven.

Police dogs aren’t just a part of their K-9 team, but become essential members of the entire department, Craven said.

“It is rewarding when you have trained them, and then see them accomplish those tasks in the field. Working with the dog as part of the team is certainly the best component. It’s fun to watch them (members of the department) rely on him to do his part,” he said.

“He becomes a cog in the wheel that allows a scenario to hopefully come to a peaceful resolution,” said Craven.

“I believe in integrity. Dogs have it. Humans are sometimes lacking it.”

— Cesar Millan

Merchant... (from page 1)
es and businesses to try to do the same,” Sabel said.

“We are all in this together. We will get through it together. GP cares. GP thrives. Live Rogue,” said Sabel.

GP Restaurants Offering Take-Out Dining Service

Ahi Sushi and Sake Bar, 941 SE 7th St., (541)474-5554
Babe’s Bakery, 1701 NE 6th St., (541)476-1710
Ban Mai Thai, 1887 NE 7th St., (541)476-2578
Big O Spuds, 1950 NE 7th St., (541)450-2427
Black Forest Restaurant, 820 NE E St., (541)444-1845
Bohemian Bar & Bistro, 233 SW G St., (541)471-7158
Carson’s Bistro, 220 DW H St., (541)916-8020
Casa Amiga, 200 Mcdonald Lane, (541)956-8602
Casablanca Coffee & Grill, 668 Union Ave., (541)479-2831
Circle J Cafe, 241 SW G St., (541)479-8080
Cultured Palate, 208 SW 6th St., (541)295-8318
Cynthia’s Home Sweet Home, 1038 NW 6th St., (541)479-5953
El Molcajete, 201 E Park St., (541)474-1506
Fat Tony’s, 1212 NW 6th St., (541)507-1957
Gold Miner Restaurant, 786 SE 7th St., (541)474-2418
The Haul, 121 SW H St., (541)474-4991
Herb’s Restaurant, 515 Rogue River Hwy., (541)476-1313
Hong Kong Restaurant, 820 NW 6th St., (541)476-4244
Horny Goat, 234 SW 5th St., (541)507-1901
Jimmy’s Classic Drive-In, 515 NE 6th St., (541)479-3850
La Burrita, 1501 NE F St., (541)471-1444
Laughing Clam, 121 SW G St., (541)479-1110
Leo’s BBQ, 949 Rogue River Hwy., (541)476-2295
Lupita’s Taqueria, 147 NE E St., (541)476-3082
Ma Mosa’s, 118 NW E St., (541)479-0236
Matsuzak’s, 1675 NE 7th St., (541)479-2961
Musashi Japanese Restaurant, 314 SE H St., (541)955-8848
Oregon Pour Authority, 235 SE 7th St., (541)295-8540
Papa Murphy’s Pizza, 1011 NE 7th St., (541)476-1106
Papa Murphy’s Pizza, 263 Rogue Rvr Hwy., (541)956-9988
Red Robin, 1561 Allen Creek Rd., (541)916-4986
Royal Barge Thai Cuisine, 120 SW H St., (541)474-6942
Saigon Xich Lo, 405 NE 7th St., (541)441-1481
Shari’s Restaurant, 190 NE Agness Ave., (541)474-6699
Si Casa Express, 294 Union Ave., (541)472-9400
Sunshine Natural Foods, 128 SW H St., (541)474-5040
Sweet Tea Express, 1330 Redwood Ave., (541)244-1225
Sweet Tea Express, 162 NE Beacon Dr., (541)916-8444
Taroko Asian Tapas Bar, 414 NW 6th St., (541)474-7108
Thai BBQ, 428 SW 6th St., (541)476-4304
The Vine, 1610 Allen Creek Rd., (541)479-8463
Weekend Beer/Valentino’s, 550 SW 6th St., (541)507-1919
Wild Grapes Bistro, 1555 Williams Hwy., (541)916-8023
Wild River Brewing & Pizza, 595 NE E St., (541)471-7487
Yogurt Hut, 162 NE Beacon St., (541)956-0111
Yumberry Bowl, 136 NE Steiger St., (541)218-9977

grantspassoregon.gov/1356/Restaurant-and-Business-Guide

www.grantspassoregon.gov