

City of Monmouth

City Manager's Report

A Report on City of Monmouth News, Happenings, Successes and Other Items

March 27, 2014

Medical Marijuana

If there's been a hot issue recently in local government, it's been Medical Marijuana. The State authorized medical marijuana dispensaries to operate in Oregon as a means to allow easier access for medical marijuana holders. While the State adopted some reasonable regulations for operating a dispensary, the question of local authority over dispensaries has been quite hazy. Some cities have moved to ban dispensaries either through their land use regulations or another section of the code book, some are o.k. with dispensaries and many just aren't sure. Many interesting questions roll around this subject, including how do you allow something (sale of marijuana) that is not allowed by Federal law? In the recent short legislative session, local governments were given the option of enacting a temporary ban on dispensaries so they can consider regulatory and siting issues. Monmouth approved a ban on March 18. This will give us time to consider dispensary regulations and to see if clearer direction may come from the State.

Monmouth Downtown Article

The below article appeared in the March issue of the League of Oregon Cities monthly newsletter. While this may be old news to you, I thought I'd share it because it's a good summary of our accomplishments.

Thanks to the efforts of the City and local building owners and businesses, Monmouth's downtown has seen a remarkable transformation. The previous state of downtown was nice, but had a limited choice of available goods and services. There also wasn't much open after 5:00 p.m.

The Monmouth downtown of today is a vibrant hub that features a wide variety of goods and services. There are great restaurants and coffee houses, shops selling everything from bagels to clothing to gifts to flowers, and services like barbers, a bike shop and carpet cleaning. Removing limitations on the sale of alcohol has directly contributed to the downtown resurgence.

The Monmouth City Council designated improvement of the downtown as a primary goal seven years ago. It has continued as a primary goal each year.

Through the Urban Renewal District's Façade Grant Program, we have partnered with building and business owners to improve 23 business fronts. The results of this program are highly visible and one of the first things that new and old visitors to downtown notice. The City also provided incentives to facilitate the construction of a new mixed use building that features three commercial spaces on the first floor and six upstairs apartments.

On the infrastructure side, the City completed a \$790,000 streetscape project that unified the downtown and built a new \$160,000 fountain and splash play area in Main Street Park. The fountain and splash play area has been highly popular, which supports City efforts to get people downtown.

While a City can lay the groundwork, or create a good environment for downtown success, nothing happens unless individual business people also step up to the plate. In addition to substantial investments made by building owners, dozens of entrepreneurs have set up shop in Monmouth. In fact, we have seen a net increase of 30 new businesses in Monmouth over the past seven years. We are currently functioning with a near zero vacancy rate in our downtown.

Monmouth feels very fortunate that we have been able to able to substantially revitalize our downtown, particularly during a recession. Having a clear goal and across the board support has been invaluable.

Visitor Guides

So, is Monmouth a tourist destination? While we won't be competing with Portland, Bend or Lincoln City any time soon, we do have tourists that visit our area. Our wineries are a big draw. People come here to get out of the big city or to enjoy our awesome cycling routes. We have some great historic buildings. If these nice people would like to visit us and leave some money behind, they are most welcome. To help increase awareness of our area as a tourist attraction the Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Cities of Independence and Monmouth to produce and distribute visitor guides around our area and at three Oregon Welcome (Visitor) Centers around the state. Economic development can come in many forms. Tourism is one.

Bounty Market

If you've seen or been to the successful Polk Bounty Market in Dallas, you'll be happy to know that there will be a Monmouth version starting this spring. The new market will be sponsored by the City of Monmouth. It will be open on Tuesdays starting in May in Main Street Park. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Keep an eye out for details.

Policy Analysis Class

While Monmouth is very conservative fiscally and maintains very strong financials, our weakest fund is the Street Fund. The street fund pays for street repairs and maintenance, street lighting and operations of our storm water system. Like every city and county in the state, street fund revenues from gas taxes have not nearly kept up with increased operational costs. The street fund is burning through its reserves as we speak. I recently posed the question of how to improve the stability of the street fund to a Western Oregon University Policy Analysis class. Four

teams were set up to analyze the issue, review options and to make recommendations. The overall consensus was to use a local gas tax or fee to help with daily maintenance needs and to float a bond for major repair work. The teams did excellent work and presented very thoughtful recommendations

Tangent City Council

I recently made a presentation to a group of small cities about our successful bond measure to build a new police station. Based on that presentation, I was invited to speak to the Tangent City Council on this topic and to provide advice on how they could work to pass a tax base issue. It was very enjoyable to consider a key policy issue in another community and to offer some (hopefully) good advice. That's one thing that is very nice about working in local government - everyone is very willing to share information. This cuts down greatly on "reinventing the wheel".

New Police Station

Speaking of the new police station, we are making great progress. Our architect has completed preliminary designs and cost estimates for the project and we have selected the main contractor. Construction activities should start in a few months.

If you have any questions about items in this report or anything related to the City, please call me at 503-751-0146 or e-mail me at smcclure@ci.monmouth.or.us.

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