



Photo by Sarah Brown

Lebanon's Twilight Parade proceeds down Main Street to kick off the Christmas season on Dec. 6.

Holiday season gets off to roll in Lebanon

Downtown was lit when Holidays in the Park brought out its annual celebration on Saturday, Dec. 6.

As dusk turned to night on this short winter day, residents and visitors lined Main Street to watch the Twilight Parade. The City of Lebanon and local downtown merchants added a festive spirit to the street with lighted trees and deco-

rations, and those who participated in the parade added the main attraction with their lighted vehicles and merry promenaders.

As Mr. and Mrs. Claus closed out the parade, attention was turned to Ralston Park where strings of light waited to be powered on. Santa and his wife joined former mayor Paul Aziz to turn on the over-

sized candy-striped light switch, after which the park came alive with electric color.

A featured addition to the annual celebration this year were two large animated Christmas trees – a vision inspired and powered by Dave Madrus – situated in the square lot of the park next to the Chevron station. Donations from businesses

and individuals made this vision a reality this year, and it was Aziz who programmed the lighted trees in tune with a synchronized program that can be heard on 92.7 FM from 6-10 p.m. every night this month.

See more photos on page 8 or online at LebanonLocalNews.com.

Newspaper merger to start in January, serve east county

By Lebanon Local Staff

Subscribers to Lebanon Local will see a big change on Jan. 7 when they get a newspaper in the mail.

That's because the publishers of The New Era weekly newspaper and Lebanon Local have determined to merge the two newspapers into one weekly publication, under The New Era name, which will serve east Linn County.

"We've decided that, in today's economy for newspapers, the best way to improve service to our Lebanon readership and to provide more stability for the entire operation is to publish a single weekly newspaper that serves both communities," said Scott Swanson, who with his wife Miriam are co-publishers of the newspapers.

They founded Lebanon Local in 2016, at the behest of leading citizens of Lebanon when it became increasingly evident that the Lebanon Express, which had served the community for over a century, was nearing the end of its existence, at least in print.

"We figured at that time that

See Merger, Page 11

Performance for the Season



Buddy the Elf (Cyan Davis), right, sniffs out a fake Santa (Eiryss Brandt) in Seven Oak Theatre Club's dress rehearsal performance of "Elf Jr. The Musical."

Photos by Sarah Brown

See more photos on page 16

INSIDE



LEBANON TEEN DEAD, SWEET HOME GIRL INJURED IN CRASH
PAGE 5



ENTEK FILLS THANKSGIVING TABLES FOR LOCAL FAMILIES
PAGE 9



FOR KIDS ONLY: NEW YOUTH CENTER OPENS
PAGE 10





Photo courtesy of LFD

Cigarette butt puts volunteer firefighters to real first test

Just hours after completing its Volunteer Fall Fire Academy, the Lebanon Fire District (LFD) put its newest recruits to the test during a real emergency.

The academy concluded Dec. 6 with six new volunteers successfully finishing their final live-fire training exercise, a crucial benchmark that certifies them to respond to structure fires and other emergencies within the district.

Shortly after crews finished restoring equipment from the training, LFD was dispatched to a structure fire in the 31000 block of Waterloo Road.

Thanks to the large number of volunteers still at the station, the district was able to assemble and deploy per-

sonnel quickly.

LFD reported that accessing the fire proved challenging. The residence sat at the top of a long, narrow, steep driveway, limiting apparatus access. LFD got one engine and one tender to the top, while additional firefighters, tools and equipment had to be shuttled up the driveway using staff vehicles.

Despite the difficult terrain, firefighters were eventually able to contain and extinguish the fire. Crews remained on scene for approximately three hours to fully extinguish hot spots and ensure the structure was safe.

The fire was determined to have been caused by an improperly discarded cigarette butt.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Information for the Public Safety report and Courts in Lebanon Local is sourced from local law enforcement and fire agencies. Incident details, which may not always be available from agencies in time for publication in our weekly paper edition, are often updated online at lebanonlocalnews.com as information becomes available. Addresses provided generally denote the location of the incident or arrest, occasionally indicating the origin of the call.

It is crucial to emphasize that our reporting of an individual's arrest or citation for a crime does not imply guilt. Determination of guilt can only be established through legal proceedings in court. We commit significant effort to following through as cases move through the judicial process.

Following is a list of abbreviations that may appear in our log reports: LCSO (Linn County Sheriff's Office); SHPD (Sweet Home Police Department); OSP (Oregon State Police); LMC (Lebanon Municipal Court); SHMC (Sweet Home Municipal Court); AMC (Albany Municipal Court); LCCC (Linn County Circuit Court); LCJC (Linn County Justice Court); LCSA (Linn County Supervisory Authority); OSPB (Oregon State Parole Board); FTA (failure to appear); FTC (failure to comply); DV (domestic violence). A roman numeral listed after a charge means that the charge is that numbered-degree: theft I (first-degree theft).

Dec. 8

8:10 a.m. - Travis M. Sweiner, 40, cited for criminal trespass II, Lebanon Market.

8:13 a.m. - Kelen Giggley arrested for criminal trespass following eviction in 3200 block Oak Terrace Dr. Transported to Linn County Jail. Report taken.

10:12 a.m. - Caller reported safe stolen approximately one month prior from 38500 block River Dr. Multiple items missing, including firearms. Investigation ongoing. Report taken.

1:25 p.m. - Felisha Krystal Kay Pescue, 34, taken into custody on AMC warrant for FTA, LMC warrant for probation violation - theft II, and LCSA warrant for probation violation - DUII.

2:27 p.m. - Theft reported in 3700 block S. Santiam Hwy. Items stolen had estimated value of \$250. Investigation ongoing. Report taken.

7:14 p.m. - Amazon package stolen from front porch, 600 block W Isabella St. Loss: \$32.

Dec. 7

2:01 a.m. - Justin Kenneth Dill, 30, cited on LMC warrant for probation violation and LCCC warrant for contempt of court.

8:49 a.m. - Joseph Jones, 44, cited for dog at large, 500 block W Rose St. Report taken.

2:23 p.m. - Wallet found in 30800 block S. 5th St. Lodged at LCSO for owner to claim. Report taken.

2:54 p.m. - Driver doing burn-outs, S 10th/W Rose Sts. Driver warned.

7:15 p.m. - Deputies re-

sponded to report of trespass in 31100 block Old Santiam Hwy. Kierra Stewart, 22, Kendra Wood, 21, Mateao Lopez, 21, Kayci Flaska, 24, all Lebanon residents, cited for trespassing II. Report taken.

7:23 p.m. - Michelle Ann Leonard, 42, taken into custody for domestic harassment.

10:03 p.m. - Caller reported person stealing from mailboxes, 800 block W Grant St. Caller later said he watched his camera system and now thinks a person was just picking up dog poop, not going through mailboxes. Report taken.

11:39 p.m. - Christina Watts, 37, of Lebanon, cited for driving uninsured, 2400 block S. Santiam Hwy.

Dec. 6

3:32 a.m. - Whitney Montgomery, 39, of Lebanon, cited for driving while suspended, and for LMC warrant, Oak/7th streets. Report taken.

6:44 a.m. - Officer attempted traffic stop for expired tags and failure to obey traffic control device. Vehicle eluded, headed toward Scio. LCSO involved, found vehicle abandoned in river near Hess Road.

8:56 a.m. - Subject said ex-girlfriend took things from his car and damaged his garden, 200 block S Williams St.

9:49 a.m. - Dispute over dog breeding situation, 700 block Morton St.

11:05 a.m. - Deputy responded to report of fraud, 41800 block Cut Off Dr. According to LCSO, the caller received a check in the mail for \$9,000. A bank alerted the

caller that it was fraudulent and they were not out of any money. There was a letter with the check asking them to call and learn about the \$2.5 million prize they had won.

7:48 p.m. - Boat and trailer reported stolen from area of Sand Ridge Rd./Plainview Dr. According to LCSO, a blue and white 1994 Blue Water Pro Ski boat with a wake tower on a trailer was left on the side of the road due to a flat tire. When the owner returned, the boat and trailer were gone. Report taken.

11:12 p.m. - Ashley Marie Spradlin, 32, cited for theft II after skip scanning clothes and a toy at Walmart.

Dec. 5

6:46 a.m. - Geraldine Richel Bagg, 30, cited for operating an unsafe vehicle. Bagg said her tire wobbled badly while on I-5 last night. This morning her tire fell off while driving, and her car crashed into two parked cars, 200 block E Grant St.

7:44 a.m. - Citizen reported juvenile conundrum: daughters were refusing to go to school, 39400 block Klum St.

10:08 a.m. - Thomas Haught, 61, of Lebanon, arrested on Benton County and LMC warrants. Also cited for driving while suspended and driving uninsured. 33500 block Goltra Rd. Report taken.

12:22 p.m. - Juvenile trespassed from CTC property in 30300 block Butte Creek Rd. after allegedly tearing up gravel with his vehicle.

12:37 p.m. - Patron at Ixtapa left handgun in women's restroom. Gun handed over to police, owner picked it up later.

12:42 p.m. - Andrea Dawn Ylen, 50, cited for speeding 37/20 school zone, 600 block N 5th St.

2:16 p.m. - Renae Marie Tacy, 54, cited for speeding 35/20 school zone, 500 block Cascade Dr.

2:28 p.m. - Madeline Mae Serenity Yzaguirre, 19, cited for speeding 36/20 school zone, 500 block Cascade Dr.

See Public Safety, Page 12

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Donating to arts has local impact Editor:

Those who donate to good causes at the end of each year should consider the Oregon Cultural Trust. This program, unique to Oregon, lets you double the impact of your donation at no extra cost.

Here's how the Cultural Trust works: Donate to your favorite organization(s) among 1,860 qualified cultural nonprofits. (Thirty-four of them are in Linn County. To find out whether your favorite is included, visit the website at culturaltrust.org.) Donate the same amount to

the Cultural Trust. Then take the same amount off your state taxes. Your donation to the Cultural Trust returns to you as a tax credit. Individuals can get a tax credit up to \$500, couples up to \$1,000, and class-C corporation up to \$2,500.

The money given to the Cultural Trust is dispersed across Oregon to keep cultural organizations thriving throughout the state. Since 2003, donations to the Cultural Trust have generated more than \$40 million in grants to cultural organizations across Oregon.

A portion of Cultural Trust funds are distributed locally

by Cultural Coalitions, one for each county and federally recognized tribe in Oregon.

This year, the Linn County Cultural Coalition distributed \$25,000 of these funds among seventeen local organizations. Every Linn County 501(c)(3) organization with a project involving the arts, heritage, or humanities is welcome to apply to the Coalition for funding.

The next deadline for applications is Feb. 1, 2026.

For more information, visit linnculture.org.

**Linda Ziedrich, president
Linn County Cultural
Coalition
Lebanon**

Lebanon's New Neighbor Program

Lebanon is welcoming new residents to town by extending hospitality from our local merchants as well as maps and guides to help them settle in Our Town!

And it's FREE!

If you or someone you know is new to Lebanon and would like a

New Neighbor Packet

Stop by the Lebanon Chamber of Commerce
Monday-Saturday
1040 S. Park St., Lebanon

"Welcome!"



EVENTS

Grant applications being accepted

The Linn County Cultural Coalition is accepting proposals for grants to fund projects involving the arts, humanities and heritage activities in Linn County.

The LCCC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization affiliated with the Oregon Cultural Trust, a statewide entity established to promote and strengthen cultural activities in Oregon. The Trust distributes funding to all 36 Oregon counties and nine federally recognized tribes through coalitions like the one in Linn County.

The Coalition will have \$27,500 to distribute. Grants typically range between \$250 and \$2,500. Applicants may be awarded less than the full amount requested.

The grants are available to nonprofit organizations with tax-exempt status. An organization or individual sponsored by a qualifying nonprofit may also apply. Full guidelines for applying are available at LinnCulture.org.

The deadline for completed grant applications is Feb. 1. The Coalition board will review the applications and decide on awards within a few weeks of that date.

Grant applications must be submitted online or sent by email to LinnCulture@gmail.com. The application form is available at LinnCulture.org.

For further information, contact Rebecca Bond at (541) 928-0911 or Linda Ziedrich at (503) 707-1539.

Seedling sale open

Linn County Small Woodlands Association has opened pre-orders for its annual seedling sale until Jan. 31.

LCSWA offers seedlings for seven types of conifers and one deciduous tree. Nordmann fir, a popular Christmas tree, is available. The

See Events, Page 4

DEATH NOTICES

Douglas John Callahan, 86, of Lebanon, died Nov. 10, 2025. Neptune Cremation Society in Portland is handling the arrangements.

Jon "Michael" Collins, 66, of Lebanon, died Dec. 3, 2025. Huston-Jost Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Jack Eugene Hilton, 79, of Lebanon, died Nov. 18, 2025. Huston-Jost Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Kyle Bryan Jones, 39, of Lebanon, died Nov. 22, 2025. Huston-Jost Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Keith A. Klavano, 93, of Lebanon, died Nov. 16, 2025. Huston-Jost Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Janet Louise (Lutz) Miner, 79, of Lebanon, died Nov. 8, 2025. Huston-Jost Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Gerald Joseph Suing, 90, died Nov. 26, 2025. Huston-Jost Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Jason Joe White, 39, of Lebanon, died Nov. 19, 2025. Sweet Home Funeral Chapel is handling the arrangements.

CIRCUIT COURT

Warrants are out on the following individuals: Omar Edgar Arroyo, William Medford Bass, Jonathan Edward Betar, Kristina Larizza Boswell, Deanna Marie Brown, Christina Marie Cash, Austin Shane Conner, Matthew Timothy Cook, Steven Michael Cooley, Selina Renee Ford-Blackburn, Scotty Lee Foster, Steven Edward Grimm, Aaron Thomas Halvorson, Robert Edwin Hoskinson, David Mark Jones, Bruce Clifton Kelly, Alan Kenneth Kilmer, Brent Jay Klient, Andrew Donald LeGore, Mikel Vincent Lizama, Christopher James Lloyd, Mainor Misael Lucas-Velasquez, Faron Walter Kennedy, Heather Dawn Meeks, Matthew Kincaid Nelson, Daniel Ryan Salo, Rosemary O. Saviour, Phillip Stanley Shanklin, Donald Shane Simmons, April Lee Springer, Harley Dixie Dean Tinker Vader, Joshua Webb, Darnell T. Wells, Jessica Ashley Wynne

Kelvin Edwin Attebery, 36, charged Nov. 25 with DUII (controlled substances),

criminal driving while suspended or revoked, assault IV and recklessly endangering another person.

Elias Nicolas Azar, 42, sentenced Nov. 24 to one year suspension of a license, three days jail, 24 mos. bench probation and \$2,255 in fines and fees after pleading no contest to DUII (liquor) with a .15% BAC. A reckless driving charge was dismissed.

A charge against **Geraldine Rachel Bagg, 30**, of hindering prosecution was dismissed without prejudice.

Travis Lee Clarkson, 38, sentenced Nov. 20 to 360 hours jail, 36 mos. supervised probation and \$200 in fines after pleading no contest to DV assault IV and criminal mischief II. Dismissed: second count of criminal mischief II.

Kaila Marie Clayton, 36, charged Nov. 20 with criminal mischief I, criminal trespass I and theft III. Allegations involve theft of beer and damage to laptops at Walmart.

Gage Austin Ferrando, 20, sentenced Dec. 9 to 90 days suspension of a driver's li-

cense and 60 days with the Oregon Dept. of Corrections after pleading guilty to fleeing or attempting to elude. Reckless driving and additional fleeing charge dismissed. In a separate case he was sentenced to 100 mos. with the Oregon Dept. of Corrections and 20 years post-prison supervision after pleading no contest to rape I. Additional rape I charge dismissed.

Michael Edward-Leverne Gagner, 43, sentenced Nov. 19 to 10 days compensatory service in lieu of jail, 24 mos. bench probation and a \$100 fine after pleading guilty to endangering the welfare of a minor. Dismissed: unlawful delivery of a marijuana item.

Kenneth Dale Gates, 52, charged Dec. 4 with unauthorized use of a vehicle, reckless driving and disorderly conduct II. Bail set at \$10,000.

Hope Rene Hodge, 20, sentenced Dec. 4 to 10 days compensatory service in lieu of jail and 36 mos. bench probation after pleading no contest to assault IV.

Christopher Lee Hurt, 36,

charged Dec. 5 with burglary I, six counts of theft I, burglary II, unlawful entry into motor vehicle, six counts of felon in possession of a firearm, and fleeing or attempting to elude. Bail set at \$100,000.

Javan Wayne Inget, 41, placed in diversion program after pleading guilty to DUII (alcohol) with a .10% BAC.

Andrew Joel Leland, 39, charged Nov. 17 with DUII (liquor) and reckless driving.

John Andrew Mance, 37, charged Dec. 8 with felon in possession of a firearm.

Jesse James Marquez, 29, sentenced Dec. 5 to 60 days jail, 36 mos. supervised probation after pleading no contest to burglary II, and guilty to criminal mischief II, assaulting a public safety officer and aggravated harassment. Dismissed: disorderly conduct II, unlawful entry into a motor vehicle, criminal mischief II, resisting arrest and attempt to commit a Class B felony.

Emily Elizabeth Ouellette, 39, charged Dec. 4 with using a child in display of sexually explicit conduct, and en-

couraging child sexual abuse I. Bail set at \$25,000.

David Allen Perez, 63, charged Nov. 21 with two counts of sodomy I, five counts of sexual abuse I, two counts of unlawful sexual penetration I, using child in display of sexually explicit conduct, and invasion of personal privacy I. Allegations involve a female under 14.

Christopher Thomas Richey, 38, charged Nov. 21 with two counts of sexual abuse I involving a female under age 14.

A charge against **Allen Jess Russell, 56**, of criminal trespass II dating back to 2012 and associated FTAs was dismissed in the interest of justice.

Nickoles A. Willoughby, 20, charged Dec. 10 with sexual abuse involving a female under 14. Bail set at \$100,000.

Christopher Dee Wright, 33, charged Dec. 12 with DV assault II, failure to perform duties of driver to injured persons, reckless driving and two counts of DV strangulation. Bail set at \$75,000.



DIAL-A-BUS
CURB TO CURB IN SWEET HOME
MON-FRI 7 AM - 4 PM
CALL TO SCHEDULE
OFFICE HOURS 8-4



SWEET HOME SHOPPER
MON-SAT 9 AM - 4 PM
SHOP LOCAL- 4 TRIPS A DAY
THROUGH TOWN

LEBANON:
WALMART
LBCC
PARK & OAK

ALBANY:
LBCC MAIN CAMPUS
TRAIN STATION
HERITAGE MALL
DOWNTOWN
SAT ONLY: KOHL'S & WINCO

MON-FRI 6 AM - 10 PM - 10 ROUTES PER DAY
SAT 7 AM - 7:30 PM - 6 ROUTES PER DAY
CALL FOR APPROVED FLAG STOPS

SWEET HOME:
FOSTER
SH CITY HALL
HOY'S HARDWARE
13TH & KALMIA
SHEA POINT

LEBANON:
WALMART
LBCC
PARK & OAK

ALBANY:
LBCC MAIN CAMPUS
TRAIN STATION
HERITAGE MALL
DOWNTOWN
SAT ONLY: KOHL'S & WINCO

STUDENTS RIDE FREE WITH STUDENT ID | ALL OTHERS \$1 PER TRIP
ELECTRONIC TICKETS - DOWNLOAD THE TOKEN TRANSIT APP: TOKENTRANSIT.COM
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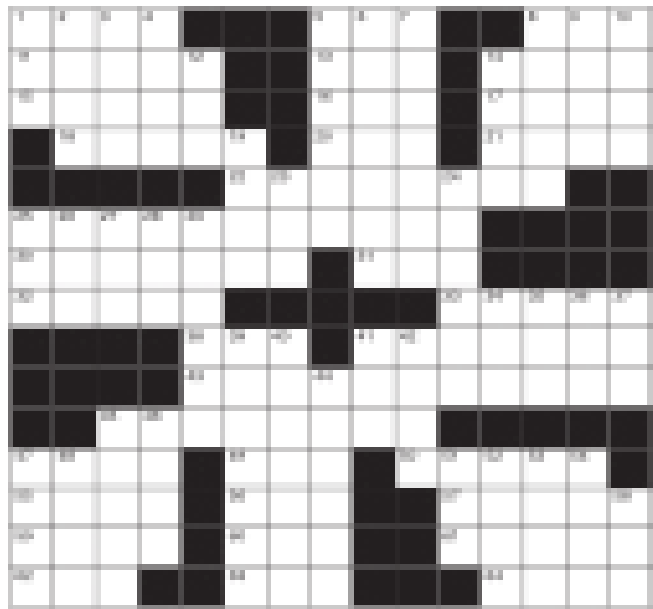
Crossword KEY
Puzzle on page 4

A	R	A	B		C	P	A		A	S	H					
L	O	G	I	A		A	R	T		O	B	E	Y			
A	C	H	E	D		N	A	E		T	E	R	M			
A	A	R	O	N		N	I	L		S	T	A	N			
						E	M	E	R	I	T	U	S			
D	A	V	E	C	O	U	L	I	E	R						
E	L	E	G	A	N	T		E	R	A						
C	L	E	O	N						V	E	G	A	N		
						A	P	T		T	R	E	M	O	L	O
						R	E	U	P	H	O	L	S	T	E	R
						O	D	Y	S	S	E	Y	S			
A	L	A	E		E	S	P		S	A	B	E	R			
T	A	K	A		T	O	P			A	I	L	E	D		
T	I	E	D		A	C	E			R	A	B	B	I		
U	R	N			S	K	R			S	A	S	S			

SUDOKU KEY
Puzzle on page 4

6	3	1	4	9	5	8	2	7
5	9	8	7	1	2	6	3	4
7	2	4	6	3	8	9	1	5
8	7	2	5	4	1	3	6	9
4	5	3	2	6	9	1	7	8
1	6	9	8	7	3	4	5	2
2	1	6	9	8	7	5	4	3
9	4	7	3	5	6	2	8	1
3	8	5	1	2	4	7	9	6

CROSSWORD



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Member of a Semitic people
- 3. Caribbean public accountant
- 5. Resident
- 11. Sayings attributed to Christ
- 13. The production of human creativity
- 14. Listen to
- 15. Largest
- 16. No (Romanian)
- 17. Biscuits
- 18. Tankers' association: Judge
- 20. Zone
- 21. Common legend: Lee
- 22. Rosemary's life: border
- 23. "Wrecked" Jerry
- 26. Gravelly and stylish
- 31. Picking item
- 32. Former Miss world: border: Jones
- 33. One who avoids animal products
- 35. Quick to learn
- 41. Mechanism in an organ
- 43. Beds with new materials
- 45. Epics
- 47. Wings
- 49. Extraneous perception
- 50. Cavalry sword
- 53. Bangladeshi monetary unit
- 54. Not the bottom
- 57. Affected
- 59. Broad
- 60. One who is highly skilled
- 61. Jewish spiritual leader
- 62. Tall, rounded run
- 63. Linguistic language of (Romanian) (abbr.)
- 64. Check

CLUES DOWN

- 1. For ____ needs
- 2. Portuguese caps
- 3. Ottoman military title
- 4. Movable items used in hotels
- 5. Type of soil
- 6. A leafless grassy plain
- 7. John's weakness
- 8. Rains
- 9. Peninsular Spanish
- 10. A song of praise to God
- 11. Much ____ about nothing
- 14. Japanese city
- 19. Jewish member (B)
- 15. Egyptian goddess
- 24. On place
- 25. Herring fish
- 26. Complete
- 27. Automotive belt
- 28. Poplar
- 29. Malicious hint
- 34. Medical personnel
- 35. Asquipped
- 36. Type of beverage
- 37. Mother
- 39. Spanish monetary unit
- 40. Small area of grass
- 41. Beer
- 42. Dime ____, ring
- 44. Salt's partner
- 45. Made of wood
- 46. No longer alive
- 47. African island
- 48. Bird animal's roosting place
- 51. Belonging
- 52. Partiality
- 53. "Latter" name: John
- 54. LMA's "Bambi" ____
- 55. Critique

SUDOKU

			4		5	8		
	9	8			2			4
		4	6	3			1	
		2				3		9
		3						
	6	9	8			4	5	2
2	1							
				5	6			1
		5		2	4			6

Level: Beginner

Editorial: Goodbye, Lebanon Local?

By Scott Swanson
Publisher

Well, the time has come to say good-bye to Lebanon Local.

But not really.

As you can see in our story on page 1, we have decided to merge Lebanon Local with The New Era, the weekly newspaper that has served Sweet Home since 1929, to expand its coverage over all of east Linn County.

As noted in the story on page 1, when we founded Lebanon Local in October of 2016, our goal was to fill a gap that was becoming increasingly obvious with the gradual demise of the Lebanon Express, whose corporate owners clearly were not interested in making the investments necessary to continue the robust coverage of the community that the Express had provided for 100-plus years.

Lebanon citizens were concerned and several local leaders approached us about the possibility of "doing something like 'The New Era' here in Lebanon."

Even then, there was increasing competition for advertising dollars from social media and the Internet and we knew it was going to be a bit of a gamble. But we had a good staff, including a former editor of the Express, working for us in Sweet Home and we decided we could do a monthly, to start, while we waited to see what happened.

The printed version of the Express did die a few years later, a mere shadow of what it had been. We'd planned to take Lebanon Local weekly in 2020, but the pandemic left us hanging on by the fingernails, so to speak, and it obviously didn't happen.

The monthly was certainly better than nothing for Lebanon, but coverage of community government was often delayed and there was little to no sports coverage, which to me, as a former

sportswriter, was a crucial part of covering the local community. I wasn't happy being a monthly, but it was the best we could do under the circumstances. It was a big risk, in a tenuous advertising market, to go weekly and would have required significant increases in staff (costs) for us, as a relatively small organization, to make it happen.

As many readers know, in the summer of 2023 we sold the operation to a former employee, who decided after 18 months that he didn't want to continue in what had become a dire economic situation for the newspapers. Thanks to some very generous financial support from the community, particularly in Sweet Home, my wife Miriam and I decided to return and see if we could right the ship. We still had experienced staff members, all of whom had been with us before we sold and who had weathered the difficult months, and all of that helped get us back into the black.

But it was clear to us, coming back to an economic situation that included even more competition for advertising revenue than had existed when we left, fewer reporters and higher workloads, that we needed to find a way to further stabilize the financial foundation of The New Era (and by extension, Lebanon Local) in a rapidly changing world.

Even though grocery stores, car dealers and real estate agents no longer run specific sale listings (if they run ads at all) in the local newspaper, and the volume of classified ads is far less than they once were, display advertising is still a primary revenue source. The simple formula for us is this: advertising equals reporting. The number of ads dictates how many pages we have, and over the long haul, the size of

our news staff.

We're grateful that some advertisers continue to recognize the value of promoting themselves in a publication that people read who want credible information about what's happening around them, and that's the primary reason why we have two newspapers locally.

Obviously, there will be some changes, most of them positive, in this merger. The biggest will be sports coverage, which has been sorely lacking in the monthly Lebanon Local. Starting with the upcoming league seasons in January we plan to begin weekly "roundup" coverage of all the sports at all three high schools in east Linn County: Lebanon, East Linn Christian Academy and Sweet Home.

Then we will also provide game/match/meet coverage of specific sports each week as space and staffing allow. As the season progresses and particular teams or athletes stand out, we plan to focus increasingly on those that are doing well as the playoffs/districts arrive, and cover any teams or athletes who make it to state.

There's a lot to do here and some of it will be new to our staff and correspondents, so we will be figuring it out, to some extent, as we go along.

We want to provide you with as financially stable a newspaper operation as possible, and hopefully be able to grow our efforts with more staffing and more coverage as we progress. Advertising equals pages and pages provide space for news, so if you enjoy reading your news on something besides a screen, growth in advertising will benefit you not only in offering you information about the offerings of local businesses, but with more news.

That's our goal: as much news as possible for our readers.

EVENTS

From page 3

shrub and perennial offerings are focused on native and pollinator-beneficial species, as well as adding interest to woodland gardens and landscaping.

Narrowleaf buck brush, blue elderberry, oceanspray,

birch leaf spirea, red flowering currant, lemonade sumac, meadow checkermallow and narrowleaf mules ear are a few of the 14 shrubs and perennials available.

There are typically additional tree and shrub seedlings for purchase on the day of the sale.

This year, most of the

conifer seedling selections will be offered as greenhouse grown plugs rather than bare root stock. Seedlings grown as a plug have a soil mass surrounding the roots, are easier to plant and have a higher survival rate.

Prices are reasonable and are a fundraiser for LCSWA to offer college scholarships to Linn County students with forestry and conservation majors. It also provides annual funding for 4-H scholarships. These local 4-H students, their parents and LCSWA members provide a volunteer workforce to make the sale a success.

Buy online at <https://linncountyswa.com/shop/>.

Christmas Eve dinner

J&C Barbecue will host a Christmas Eve dinner for

See Events, Page 7

The New Era
LEBANON LOCAL
A LOCALLY OWNED NEWSPAPER

LEBANONLOCALNEWS.COM

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Monthly - \$2.99 Annual - \$32.99

NEWS QUESTIONS / TIPS - news@lebanonlocalnews.com

Local logging firm gets ODF Merit Award honor

RDL Northwest, a logging firm headquartered in Lebanon, is one of two companies honored with the Merit Award for the Oregon Department of Forestry's Northwest Oregon Region.

Owner Rick Dennis was honored for his careful planning of units to be logged, ODF said in a statement.

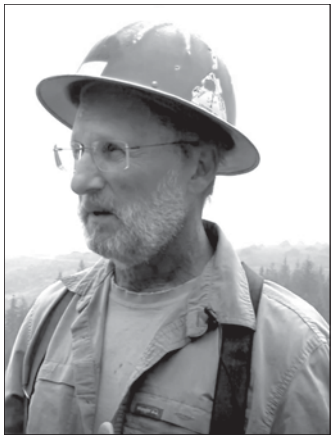
Brian Murray, director of presale for Cascade Timber Consulting, which nominated Dennis, said that although there are multiple firms in the area that could have been nominated, Dennis' meticulous attention to detail, care for environmental concerns and innovation were reasons why the company decided to nominate him for the award.

"Really, Rick Dennis does a lot of what I would say is detailed planning when given a project," Murray said. "He looks at lots of different options and evaluates them for resource protection, value for the Hill Family or the landowner we're working for."

Murray and others emphasized that RDL often leaves a logged area in better condition than when it arrived.

In a video released by ODF to announce the award, Dennis, who noted he has logged "pretty much all my life - I was babysat at a very young age on (logging) landings," said that when he leaves a job, he's thinking about how RDL's work will impact the next generation "to enjoy the benefits of someone having logged responsibly."

Jerrin Robbins, of the ODF South Cascade District office based in Sweet Home, said in



Rick Dennis

the video that Dennis has been a local leader in the development of winch assist/tether logging on steep slopes, which, Robbins said, prevents unwanted environmental damage such as trees falling into streams.

He said Dennis is innovative in developing tools necessary to do the tasks that come up in today's logging environment, and often goes the second mile.

"I've seen Rick go above and beyond numerous times in harvest operations," Robbins said in the video, adding that RDL will rehab old skid trails or fix water bars or crossing that are not working."

Said Murray: "He will have lengthy discussions with us, trying to turn over every leaf of all of the options, all the possibilities for him to succeed and to protect the resources."

Videos about each of the three Operators of the Year and five Merit Award winners, including RDL, can be viewed at www.oregon.gov/odf/Working/Pages/default.aspx.

Lebanon teen dead, second teen and 11-year-old injured in DUI crash

By Lebanon Local Staff

A Lebanon teen was killed and a Sweet Home-area girl was severely injured Friday evening, Dec. 5, in a two-vehicle collision at the intersection of McDowell Creek Drive and Berlin Road north of Sweet Home.

Linn County Sheriff Michelle Duncan said Linn County Dispatch received a 911 call reporting the collision, with occupants trapped, at approximately 9:06 p.m.

Deputies arrived and located a 2017 Ram 3500 that had been struck in the intersection by a 2002 Mazda B-Series pickup. Deputies learned that the operator of the Mazda, Zayne Hannah-Gray, 19, of Lebanon, sustained fatal injuries in the crash.

A passenger in the Mazda, whom the Sheriff's Office did not name, was transported to Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center with life-threatening injuries.

The operator of the Ram 3500, Jeff Gainer, a local chef who operates Cheffry's Gourmet Grub, also was transported to Good Sam with serious injuries, the Sheriff's Office said. His daughter, Aurora, 11, a passenger in the pickup, was transported to Legacy Emanuel Medical Center in Portland with life-threatening injuries.

According to Duncan and individuals who were at the scene, an investigation revealed that the Ram 3500 was struck at a high rate of speed on the passenger side by the Mazda, which was northbound on Berlin and failed to stop at the posted stop sign. The Ram was traveling eastbound.



Photo by Mack Knebel

Emergency responders work at the scene of a crash at the intersection of McDowell Creek Drive and Berlin Road that killed a Lebanon teen and injured three other people Dec. 5.

Alcohol has also been determined to be a factor in the crash, Duncan said. Due to the seriousness of the crash, the Multi-Agency Investigation Team was called to assist with the investigation, the Sheriff said.

Mack Knebel, a staff member at The New Era, was one of the first to arrive at the scene.

"I heard the crash," said Knebel, who lives in the area. "I got in the car and drove to the intersection. It was a mess. Walking up to the accident, I almost tripped over a car battery."

He and another neighbor saw that the red Mazda was on top of the Dodge.

"He hit the dually hard enough to push it at least 30 feet," Knebel said. "Jeff was traveling in the right lane on McDowell. It hit him hard."

Knebel said a spatula from Gainer's truck was found in a neighbor's yard.

Gainer's wife, Dr. Tessa Reff, who practices in Sweet

Home, arrived and assisted as emergency responders worked to free the girl, who was trapped in the pickup.

Reff said that her daughter underwent emergency surgery in Corvallis for a brain injury, then was transported to Randall's Children's Hospital in Portland. On Monday she was alert and was able to have her breathing tube removed, Reff said.

"She has movement in her extremities, and is alert and talking, knows where she goes to school, knows her dog's name," she said. "We're very relieved. She still has a long way to go before she comes home."

Deputies were assisted at the scene by emergency responders from the Sweet Home Fire and the Lebanon Fire District.

Anyone with information about the crash is asked to contact the Linn County Sheriff's Office at (541) 967-3950.

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Construction under way for new county mental health crisis center

By Scott Swanson
Lebanon Local

Linn County has begun construction of a new mental health crisis center in Albany that will provide temporary respite for people who need behavioral health assistance.

Work on the new facility began the week of Nov. 17 in a county-owned building directly across from Samaritan Albany General Hospital on 7th Street in Albany.

"Obviously, we have a mental health behavioral health crisis in the state of Oregon and the rest of the United States," said Todd Noble, mental health director for Linn County.

According to a COVID-19 Practitioner Impact Survey of Oregon mental health practitioners conducted by the American Psychological Association in 2022, 79% of psychologists reported seeing an increase in patients with anxiety disorders, 66% saw an increase in demand for treatment of depression, and 47% said they had seen an increase in demand for substance abuse treatment.

Oregon began closing mental health hospitals statewide, reducing the number of in-patient beds, about 20 years ago, which has put more demands on counties to provide help for mental illness.

Noble said that, "a couple

of years ago," Gov. Tina Kotek encouraged Oregon's counties to expand crisis services and build crisis centers.

Linn County already provides mental health crisis services during customary business hours and has a crisis van for providing services in rural areas around the clock, Noble said. The crisis receiving center would provide short-term assistance at a brick-and-mortar facility.

Benton, Marion and Polk counties have all recently opened such centers, some with funding from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). Lane County has a mental health stabilization center in the works that is scheduled to open in late 2027 and Lincoln County is already working on one. Marion County already had a crisis center, but has expanded it with state money.

They provide services such as suicide prevention, safety planning and referrals to longer term behavioral health care. Individuals can also get support for dealing with substance use disorder including referrals to treatment and overdose prevention education.

Anyone in crisis can enter any one of the centers without an appointment and receive services, regardless of their ability to pay. The centers are strictly voluntary.



Photo by Scott Swanson

Todd Noble and Terri McQueen stand outside the future site of Linn County's planned mental health crisis center across the street from Albany General Hospital.

Upon arrival, patients are evaluated and can stay for up to 23 hours in a calm, therapeutic environment, which will be the case in Albany. Staff can also refer individuals to other providers for ongoing treatment or to the emergency room if necessary.

The Benton County Crisis Center will include a longer-term residential facility, with six rooms and shared living space where people can stay for up to 29 days. Residential services will not be available at the centers in Linn or Lincoln counties.

Linn County's facility will not include beds for long-term care. Noble said there would be chairs for clients and staff would assist them, rather than those people going to local hospital emergency rooms for help.

If a person poses a threat, they would be transported to an emergency care center.

The new facility will provide help for troubled individuals that the county currently can't provide.

"In Linn County, we've always had a crisis team for decades," Noble said. "We're 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, and mostly going to emergency rooms. And so a few years ago, we started with crisis mobile vans. So right now we have a mobile van."

But, he said, the new crisis center will provide "sort of a respite area, where people can kind of relax, calm down, de-escalate."

"It'll be a way to get people into our our mental health program, into diversion."

He said the department will work with the District Attorney's Office and law enforcement agencies to get people into alcohol and drug services.

"So it's going to be like a one-stop shop for people that are struggling, with the goal of keeping them out of the

most expensive and challenging emergency rooms that are overburdened."

Noble said the Linn County center's location is a big plus.

"The advantage that we have is that we are the only crisis center that will be directly across the street from a hospital in the state of Oregon, and that is a huge advantage," he said, noting that in other areas people are aware that they can go to emergency rooms, which often have long wait times and are expensive.

"It's going to be a tremendous benefit for the hospital, and it'll be an easy way to access services," Noble said.

In 2023 Noble brought the issue to Linn County commissioners, who approved the use of a \$75,000 grant from the Intercommunity Health Network for the study. The IHN is a coordinated care organization that blends services offered by Samaritan Health and other private providers with those delivered by local governments, including Linn County.

Noble said Linn County did not get the OHA funding that other communities have benefited from, because of a shortage of those funds, but it has "braided" funding from a variety of sources to pay for the project.

"None" of the funding for the project is coming from the county, he said. "Mental health is not funded by the county General Fund at all. It's part of our contract that we have with the state. We've been doing (mental health services) for years, so it's not really additional."

"But as far as prioritizing, some of the biggest priorities of the state is crisis. So when we get our dollars, it's one of our highest priorities."

Noble said that the county decided to move forward with the center, rather than waiting for additional cash

infusions from the state.

"We just went ahead and started the process, because the goal is to have one of these in every region, if not every county in Oregon," he said.

The county-owned building, at 1050 7th St. SW, also houses public health services such as Linn County Public Health and its WIC program.

Linn County's center will be based on "the best model, and the first one in the state, which was actually in Deschutes County, which has been running one for a few years," he said.

"All of us - Marion County, Benton County, Clackamas, Washington, we have all looked at the model coming from Holly Harris (longtime program manager at Deschutes County Crisis Services) and Deschutes County."

Terri McQueen, I'm the health services contract and procurement manager, said the new facility is scheduled to open June 1 of next year. She said an open house will be held at that time to introduce the public to the facility.

Noble said the new center won't be operating 24 hours a day immediately, partly because it's challenging to hire behavioral health staff.

"I think we'll probably go right to 8:30 to 8, initially, then it'll creep up to 10 and then midnight."

But when clients walk in, they will get warmth - both physical and personal, and the chance to settle in a calming environment.

"Frankly, we all know, going into every emergency room across the country, you can be there for hours on end, right? So this is a real efficiency."

"The whole idea is it's a way to engage people, to get them into services. It really is like an open door. That's the ultimate plan."

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Mayor Lewis: ‘This spring I wanna drill a well’

By Sarah Brown
Lebanon Local

The next chapter in the continuing saga of Sodaville’s attempt to xxxx is an obstacle concerning claims of use and missing records.

During the city’s Nov. 20 meeting, Mayor Brian Lewis reported he was advised to resolve an issue the city has with wells 3, 4 and 5 – namely that the water rights for those wells need to be renewed, which was supposed to have taken place in 2015.

However, the city needs to file a “claim of beneficial use” to get approval for the extension of rights, which requires proving the water is being used and not wasted since

2015.

“The tough part about it is we don’t have records here in Sodaville,” Lewis said. “Our records stink.”

A renewal of the water rights will make way for the city to move forward to drill one or two wells, which is the city’s current plan of action.

“This spring I wanna drill a well,” Lewis said. “I don’t know what it’s gonna take, but if we don’t drill a well, you know we’re not gonna keep getting these grants that are gonna pay for water hauling.”

In other business:

- City Administrator/Recorder Molly McGuire confirmed a recent burst water pipe cost the city \$8,000

in lost water.

- McGuire reported a CPA is working on last year’s audit, but is slowed down by previous audits dating back 10 years that show discrepancies they are trying to understand.

- Public Works Director J D Burns reported the city is working on replacing the Well 3 pump. He thanked Councilor Roger Perry, his son Brian Perry, and resident Ray Jackman for their help with the project.

- The council approved a planning permit to partition an eight-acre property. The mayor abstained from the discussion.

EVENTS

From page 4

those who find themselves alone this holiday season.

The free, dine-in only meal will be available from 3-7 p.m. (or until gone) on Wednesday, Dec. 24, at 525 S Main St. Donations will be accepted.

City leaf pickup through December

The City of Lebanon is continuing its annual curbside leaf pickup through December.

To participate in the curbside leaf pick-up program:

Pile leaves in a row on your street a minimum of 18 inches away from the curb.

Keep leaf rows less than three feet high.

Do not block bike lanes, sidewalks, pathways, mailboxes, driveways, or intersections with leaf piles.

Place leaves separate from garbage cans and yard debris bins.

Remove any obstructions, including basketball hoops and parked cars, to allow for the leaf pick-up equipment to collect leaves.

Crews will not pick up yard debris, tree branches, grass clippings, construction materials, or garbage during leaf pick-up operations.

For more information or to express concerns, contact Lebanon Public Works at (541) 258-4918 or pw@lebanonoregon.gov.

Baby and Preschool Storytime

Lebanon Public Library’s storytimes will continue on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 55 Academy St.

Baby and Me StoryTime is

held at 10 a.m. every Wednesday. This is designed for ages 0 to 24 months and their caregivers. Those that attend will enjoy interactive time with their child through stories, finger plays, rhyme time and more.

Preschool StoryTime is held at 10 a.m. every Thursday. This allows children 3 years old through kindergarten to explore their world interactively through books, songs, finger plays and crafts.

For more information about storytimes at the Lebanon Library, call 541-258-4926, visit www.ci.lebanon.or.us/library, or follow the library on social media.

DAR accepting scholarship applications

The Santiam Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution’s Scholarship Committee is now accepting scholarship applications for graduating high school seniors, and college and graduate students in specific areas of study who plan on or are already attending an accredited college or university in the United States.

The 2026 DAR Scholarship application portal is now open, and applications are being accepted from Nov. 1, 2025 to Jan. 31, 2026 at DAR AcademicWorks. To learn more about the different scholarship opportunities and to apply, visit the online application portal found on the DAR website at <https://dar.academicworks.com/>.

The DAR administers more than two dozen scholarships in fields including medicine, nursing, science, education, law, music, English and horticulture, and several of the scholarships are renewable for up to four years of study.

In honor of America’s 250th anniversary, the America 250! Scholarship has been expanded for the 2026 award year. Ten one-time awards of \$25,000 each will be granted to students majoring in American History. Applicants must be U.S. citizens, hold a minimum 3.5 GPA (on a 4.0 scale), and submit a one-page essay on either the founding of our nation or their personal volunteer service to community and country.

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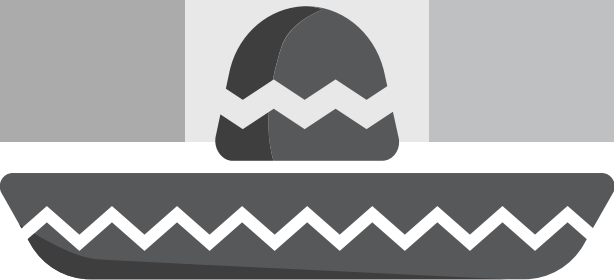
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Downtown Lebanon was alight with holiday cheer Saturday night, Dec. 6, for the annual Twilight Parade, as local residents enjoyed dozens of exquisitely lit floats and marchers decked out in sometimes elaborate holiday garb. See more photos at lebanonlocalnews.com.

Photos by Sarah Brown



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ENTEK fills Thanksgiving tables for local families

By Sarah Brown
Lebanon Local

Experience and gratitude are an excellent recipe for giving, and that's just what ENTEK and its employees cook up every Thanksgiving.

Just days before the big "T" day, employees of the local battery manufacturing company converged on The River Center to assemble a present that would feed a couple hundred families.

As they well know, it's Thanksgiving Meal Food Box season.

It's also a fitting gift right now, given recent concerns about SNAP benefits.

Although giving Thanksgiving boxes every year is important to the company, the confusion in November for SNAP recipients makes this year's gift a little more meaningful, ENTEK Marketing Manager Anthony Sciscioli said.

"It means a lot to ENTEK to do this," Sciscioli said. "I think the confusion is stressful for families, so it's nice to know that we could help a little bit."

Since as far back as they can remember, ENTEK employees have been participating in the Thanksgiving box handout.

The company's tradition is rooted in founder Jim



Photos by Sarah Brown
Craig Benjamin adds cake mix and pie to a food box.

Young's experience as he sacrificed what he could in order to build his now multi-billion dollar business.

The story goes that Young quit his job in 1979 to pursue his dream of designing a machine that could automate the assembly of lead-acid batteries. It became a tough year for his family as savings dwindled and money was borrowed to provide a Thanksgiving dinner.

But his prototype was becoming reality.

Still, by Christmas, no one in the industry showed interest in his design. Nearing bankruptcy, Young was unable to buy decent presents for his children, and they cried when they saw his "Charlie Brown" Christmas tree he brought home.

After that lowest point in his unemployed life, a chance opportunity to attend a battery show in San Francisco presented itself and, before January was over, Young had sold his ma-



James Guerra does double duty in one trip by filling two boxes at a time.

chine for \$35,000.

The orders began pouring in after that, and Young finds himself in a position to be able to give beyond his family's needs.

Through a partnership with the Lebanon Community School District, as many as 205 low income families are invited to pick up a box just in time for the Thanksgiving holiday, Sciscioli said.

ENTEK's employees pitch in to pack boxes filled with all that could be expected at

a traditional Thanksgiving meal.

Each box contains potatoes, cranberry sauce, green beans, corn, olives, butter, stuffing, pie, rolls, Cool Whip, gravy, mandarin oranges, cake mix, frosting, and, of course, a turkey.

"I just think it's such a great thing," said Craig Benjamin, who's been with the company for 27 years. "It's easy to help with and it's a nice thing to do for the community."

EXCITING NEWS YOUR NEWSPAPER IS GOING WEEKLY!

We're thrilled to announce that, starting January 2026, your Lebanon Local is moving from monthly to weekly! We are merging Lebanon Local and Sweet Home News to be ONE East Linn County news publication. That means more local news, more community updates, and more of the stories you care about — every week.

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The New Era and Lebanon Local Staff — Scott, Miriam, Sarah, Casey, Mack & Jessica

For Kids Only: New community youth center now open

By Sarah Brown
Lebanon Local

New Hope Church wanted to serve a need in the community, so they bought a building, put some video games in it and said, "Welcome in."

Staff and church members invited the community to its open house for a new community youth center, The Block, located at 2480 S Main Rd., on Saturday, Dec. 6.

Most residents will know it as the former Dottie's restaurant or, even further back, the Keystone pizza parlor.

After a thorough renovation, though, the cinderblock building now serves fun and safety for youth.

Cody Edwards, pastor of community outreach, said the drop-in center is intended as "a safe place for them to be, to come together." And it's free. It's New Hope's way of being part of the community and contributing.

Stepping into the doorway, one finds couches to the left, tables and chairs to the right, and up ahead a bar area for snack service. The back corner is sectioned off as something of a video game room. Couches, bean bags and game chairs occupy the floor space, while game controllers and television screens take control of the walls.

In addition to video games, The Block provides a variety of board games, a popcorn machine, bottled water and other snack options at no charge (although specialty snacks might be available at charge from time to time).

According to Kathy Dixon, who helped select the former restaurant as the youth



Photos by Sarah Brown

A sign replacing the former Dottie's restaurant signage on S Main Road announces the building's new purpose, a youth center.

center's location, New Hope received a financial gift that allowed them to purchase the building. Of all the locations they looked at, it was Dottie's that Dixon liked the most because of its accessible location in town.

"I think it is so great for the kids to have a place to gather," Dixon said. "I wish I had this when I was a kid."

Geared as a free after-school opportunity, youth in sixth to 12th grade are welcome to hang out at The Block, which is open four days a week (Tues. 3-6 p.m., Wed. 12-6 p.m., Thurs. 3-6 p.m., and Fri. 3-9 p.m.). No adults allowed, except for staff.

Edwards said it will be funded through the church and donations, and staffed by volunteers who've had background checks.

Kirsty Miller, who lives

within walking distance to The Block, brought her kids to the open house on Saturday. The only other option for her kids, she said, is the Boys & Girls Club.

"It looks like this will be a great place for them to hang out," she said. "This is nice, it's convenient."

New Hope Pastor Mike Tucci said his church has been talking for three years about how they could serve the community.

"We were looking at who we have in our church, what kind of giftings God brought to our church," Tucci said. "Then the big part of that was finding out what our community needs."

After some examination and surveying, they found three common themes where needs seemed to be unmet: homelessness, drug addiction, and kids with no



Volunteers and visitors fill the main lobby of The Block, where youth can grab a snack, play games and visit.

place to go.

The next step was for them to determine how their members' giftings could be used to serve one of the themes, and they landed on kids. After looking at a few properties for sale where the church might be able to reach youth, they found Dottie's.

"The whole property here felt kinda written off," Tucci said. "I feel like the Lord is writing this kind of redemptive narrative, with taking this property that was kind of written off and disregarded, and using it to minister to a group that's kind of written off, disregarded."

He explained that many adults, himself included, are guilty of assuming kids are up to no good when they're seen wandering around. The Block "is a place where kids can come and have some-

thing to eat, have something to drink, hang out with friends, do homework."

Although the youth center is for any child, regardless of religious belief, Tucci said it's also an opportunity for the church to reach the parents of the children who may have more need. Thinking more about the single parent, or those who need a little extra help, he hopes the church might be able to provide that little extra assistance.

Tucci cited property maintenance as a real hands-on example of how his church could help.

"The bigger goal is to touch that need with the gospel" in word and deed, he said.

"What we're doing here, we feel like, is just being faithful with what He's called us to," Tucci said.

City gives update on plan to clear Champion Mill site

By Jennifer Moody
For Lebanon Local

The City of Lebanon has begun accepting applications to fill an open spot on the Lebanon City Council, with an appointment expected by February.

Councilors on Wednesday, Dec. 10, officially declared a vacancy in Ward I in the position that had been held by Carl Mann.

Wednesday's meeting also included an update on a plan to clear property where people have been camping, approval of the purchase of two city LINX buses, and a closed session to evaluate the city manager and city attorney.

Mann submitted his resignation effective Dec. 4, saying "current circumstances" prevent him from completing his term. Neither Mann nor the council elaborated.

Mann's term in office was set to expire Dec. 31, 2026. The person appointed will fill that remaining year.

Ward I represents the southwestern section of the city. The boundaries are roughly West Oak Street to the north and Second Street-South Main Street to the east.

City rules allow an at-large candidate to be appointed if no candidate who lives in the ward applies for the slot within six weeks of the vacancy, councilors learned. City Recorder Julie Fisher said applications will be accepted until the council meets for interviews on Jan. 28. More information is available by contacting City Hall.

City Manager Ron Whitlatch reviewed a cleanup plan at the former Champion Mill site near Cheadle Lake, where city officials are continuing to

do environmental assessments in preparation for redevelopment.

Whitlatch said the property owners have been working with the city on a cleanup plan, but camping in the area has continued and litter is increasing. Therefore, Whitlatch said, the next step is code enforcement.

Whitlatch said he estimates three or four 40-yard trash containers will be needed to dispose of refuse on the property, and city crews will need to be dispatched to clear out the brush. Work likely will be done in the next few weeks, he said.

Property owners "are very amenable" to working with the city and have agreed to the current plan to pay for the trash containers and have a lien on the property until all cleanup costs are paid.

Police respond to the area frequently, Whitlatch said. Seven people were arrested and trespassed during the most recent visit. However, he said, they tend to return because their belongings are still on site.

Every time city representatives are at the property, they bring resources and try to sign campers up for social services, Whitlatch said. However, he told councilors, no one has taken advantage of the offers so far, nor do they pay trespassing fines or show up for court.

"We don't have the jail space," he added.

In other business, councilors approved using state and federal grant funds to purchase a new LINX Transit bus and a replacement LINX bus, one at \$137,000 and the other at \$144,000.

They adjourned into closed session for the annual performance evaluation for Whitlatch and City Attorney Tré Kennedy. Councilors took no action following the closed session, but Mayor Kenneth Jackola said after the meeting that the council is pleased with their service.

Specifically, Jackola praised Kennedy for his "sound and effective legal services" and the way he helps councilors, staff and the public understand complex issues. He said Whitlatch is a strategic thinker who cares about finding solutions, particularly when looking at what the city will need for the future.

"They're both very professional, very dedicated to their duty and to the city," Jackola said.



Image courtesy of City of Lebanon

An eagle's eye view of the proposed development site.

Fuel pumps approved for former Walgreen site

By Sarah Brown
Lebanon Local

The Lebanon Planning Commission approved a conditional use permit for a new fueling station at the former Walgreens following a public hearing on Nov. 19.

The applicant for the property, Khan Development LLC, indicated plans to use the former Walgreens building for retail purposes, with the addition of six fuel pumps on the southwest side of the building, adjacent to Santiam Highway.

A traffic study was submitted for the project, indicating the new store with fuel pumps would not require additional mitigation measures, but traffic at the intersection should continue to be monitored.

The project includes the installation of underground fuel storage tanks and an overhead canopy. Finding that all required criteria for a filling station in the mixed use zone has been met, the planning commission approved the application.

MERGER

From page 1

we could provide a quality monthly newspaper with the staff we had, which turned out to be the case," Swanson said. "But although our intention from the beginning has always been to turn it into a weekly, for various reasons we were unable to do that. We've decided this is the best solution."

The plan is that the newly revamped newspaper will include the coverage of Lebanon-area government - city councils, School Board, and Fire Board, along with other community activities that have appeared regularly in Lebanon Local, Swanson said. The difference is that the news will be more timely and, as Lebanon advertisers step up to support the effort, will result in wider coverage of a wide range of east Linn County activities.

Plus, The New Era will include weekly coverage of Lebanon-area sports - primarily Lebanon and East Linn Christian high schools, but also junior baseball and softball, particularly during the summer months. Also, readers will likely see sports feature stories on current and past athletes who have competed for Lebanon and Sweet Home.

Lebanon and Sweet Home governmental and sports news will be packaged separately as much as possible.

"Our page size, which we don't have a lot of control over,

doesn't allow us as much flexibility as we'd like, but that's the goal," Swanson said. "Our goal is to fill in a lot of blanks for Lebanon that we've been wanting to for a long time."

Human interest stories, obituaries, police reports, real estate and other "common-interest" stories pertaining to east Linn County as a whole will fill out the rest of the paper.

Public Safety logs will include both Lebanon and Sweet Home (and south county) news, as will obituaries, opinion page content, events listings and other news of common interest. Special sections, such as programs for community events, will also be common.

Initially, both websites will continue until further notice, Swanson said

Subscription prices will rise for Lebanon readers, since the paper will now be delivered weekly, but special rates are in effect for existing subscribers who will see the change. For more information on that, contact The New Era subscription department at (541) 367-2135.

The New Era is located in Sweet Home, at 1313 Main St., directly across the street from the Chevron station. Readers are always welcome to stop in. During office hours, which are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, phones are almost always answered by a human being.

For more on the merger, see our editorial on page 4.

Kuskie fills vacant Waterloo council seat

By Sarah Brown
Lebanon Local

The Waterloo City Council appointed Charlie Kuskie to fill a vacant seat during the council's Nov. 18 meeting.

Kuskie was then sworn in. He took over Adam Beskow's seat after Beskow resigned in October. The term expires Dec. 31, 2028.

Kuskie came to Waterloo about 15 years ago after being raised on the coast and in Corvallis. He and his wife have two kids. Kuskie operates a firewood business throughout western Oregon.

During his spare time, he enjoys hunting and fishing, and he helps coach his kids' sports.

Bids sought for Town Hall renovation

City Recorder Grace Reed reported she has begun reaching out to contractors for bids on an upcoming Town Hall project.

The city received a \$75,000 grant from the USDA for a bathroom addition as well as other improvements, such as possibly an HVAC system and community room. City Hall currently does not have a restroom, and utilizes a port-a-potty.

The grant requires the city to contribute an additional \$25,000 of its own money toward the project; those funds have also been acquired through a grant. So far the city has used a little more than \$5,000 to conduct an archaeological survey of the area to be sure no indigenous artifacts would be disturbed by the project.

Initial estimates Reed received for the bathroom and an HVAC mini-split run between \$76,000 and \$89,000, leaving no financial room for an added community space. Reed said she will seek more bids and bring them to council.

Other concerns noted about City Hall include mold, an electrical panel that hasn't been serviced in more than 25 years, and the porch and railings in need of repair.

The grant funds must be spent by Dec. 31, 2026.

ADU variance approved

Prior to its regular City Council meeting on Dec. 9, the council held a work session to discuss variance requests made by resident Jason Cripe, who has been seeking to add an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) to his property since early this year.

Councilor Russell Tolen noted Cripe has been asking for an ADU permit before the city began developing rules for them. After Cripe made the request, the council reviewed ADU ordinances in other municipalities and adopted its own that would ultimately exclude Cripe's request.

That's because Cripe owns .19 acres but the new rules require a minimum of .45



Photo by Sarah Brown

Charlie Kuskie, left, is sworn-in by City Recorder Grace Reed.

acres, and his ADU would be more than 50% the size of the primary residence, which exceeds the city's new rules.

"It is a unique circumstance and nobody else is going to be able to claim that (they were) here (asking for an ADU) before the ordinance was in place," Tolen said. "It seems like the right thing to do here."

Councilor Bill Young reported of the 115 lots in Waterloo, more than half are less than a half-acre and about 40% are roughly a quarter-acre.

Cripe said the main house on his property is being rented out, but when it becomes vacant he'd be interested in tearing it down to rebuild.

During the council's regular meeting, the council unanimously approved Cripe's variance requests; Councilor Chad Wolfe was absent.

In other business:

- Reed reported the city was billed for a TriMet tax, which applies only to employers in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties. She drafted a letter requesting the state fix this error.

- The council agreed to create a new Facebook page for security reasons.

- Streetmaster Chad Wolfe reported a new stop sign has been placed at 6th and Card streets.

- Discussions were held among the council regarding a tract of land off 4th Street

between Davis and Card streets. Concerns centered around debris, activity and illegal camping. The city unsuccessfully attempted to notify the property owner about ordinance violations.

- The council approved a building permit at Davis and 2nd streets.

- The council agreed to reinstate membership into the Oregon Association of Municipal Recorders.

- Justin Cary turned in his resignation as city recorder on Nov. 18. The council agreed to retroactively date replacement Reed's beginning term to the beginning of November, which removes a pro-tem status and trial period.

- Reed announced she accepted a job offer with her full-time employer that would change her hours of availability, but she would be happy to continue serving as Waterloo's city recorder. The council agreed for her schedule and city business hours to be set to one weekday morning per week and two Saturdays a month.

- Enforcement Officer Dennis Scott reported on ordinance violations regarding a fence installation and roaming chickens. The council agreed to table "the chicken business" until the next meeting.

- Reed reported the city received a \$750 grant to replace City Hall's security door.

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PUBLIC SAFETY
From page 12

theft III and criminal trespass I.

11:54 a.m. - Deputies responded to disturbance over portable toilet. Portable toilet company was trying to retake possession of portable toilet because of missed payments, which resulted in verbal dispute, 35300 block Richardson Gap Rd.

1:56 p.m. - Myles Patrick Bishop, 39, cited for driving uninsured.

3:41 p.m. - LCSO conducted death investigation in 400 block Center St. Deceased was 67-year-old man. Death ruled natural. Report taken.

3:56 p.m. - Caller reported high school student speaking about blowing the school up. Student had been assessed in

past on making similar statements at Seven Oak.

7:32 p.m. - Report taken for theft of bike, 600 block Manor Way.

9:45 p.m. - Anthony Middleton, 62, of Lebanon, cited on active warrant. 1900 block S. Main St. Report taken.

9:59 p.m. - Tina Adell Walters Pruitt, 51, cited for driving while suspended.

Dec. 2

7:44 a.m. - Nicklaus James Glasser, 36, arrested for criminal trespass I for sleeping under a bridge, and cited on LMC warrant for FTA. Report taken.

8:32 a.m. - Arrested for criminal trespass II: Loretta May Delaney, 41; Raymond Lyle Tressel, 30; Zachary Marc Steinhebel, 39; Dennis Hamilton Borden, 44; Nickolas Ryan Shoulders, 36; Jack Eldon

Thompson, 43; and Kendria Mae Wright, 34. 3100 block Burdell Blvd. Report taken.

2:17 p.m. - Juliet Blaise Palmer, 39, cited for cell phone use while driving.

3:42 p.m. - Driver reported bicyclist ran into them, Airport Rd./5th St. Bicyclist hit the ground, got up, waved and rode off, but car sustained damage.

3:43 p.m. - Axle Lee Gallagher, 34, and Nicklaus James Glasser, 36, cited for civil trespass at Ralston Park.

4:05 p.m. - Wyatt Lynn Alan Vaughan, 22, cited on LMC warrants for FTA and LCCC warrant for probation violation - DUII.

4:25 p.m. - Faren Kay Tooze, 41, taken into custody following a chase throughout town. Report taken. Charged with

See Public Safety, Page 14



St. Edwards Centivintennial

St. Edward's Catholic Church has bought itself a birthday present: fresh carpet and brand new pews.

In honor of its 120th anniversary, the church, located at 100 S Main St., updated its sanctuary in warm tones last month.

The St. Edward's parish first formed in 1905, taking occupancy of the former Cumberland Presbyterian church and installing new stained glass windows.

They broke ground for a new building just west of the original church in 1977, then replaced the former building

with its current parking lot. The sanctuary of the new building was carpeted in bright red, dark brown-stained oak pews filled the room, and light flowed through the original 1905 stained glass windows.

The current parish replaced the 48-year-old style with a deep green carpet and fresh European beechwood pews.

According to Darlene Neilson, religious education coordinator, the congregation was "pleasantly surprised," describing it as "very fresh" and "very calm."



Photo by Sarah Brown

The tour party trickles into the Ralston-Miller-Lowe house for an inside look.

Downtown tour glimpses city's hidden gems

By Sarah Brown
Lebanon Local

Some five dozen people made up the annual Lebanon Downtown Historic Walk, following tour guide Wyatt King as he shared insights into some of the city's oldest buildings on Saturday, Dec. 6.

Presented by Build Lebanon Trails, the Lebanon Museum Foundation and Lebanon Downtown Association, the tour this year included an inside look at several historic buildings downtown, revealing some of the city's hidden gems.

The Courtney Building at 718-722 Main St., today consisting of two downstairs shops and a residence upstairs, was erected in 1891. It originally housed a photo and printing shop, a drug-store and post office, and office space upstairs. The current owners have been renovating the upstairs space into a three bedroom apartment.

The Kuhn and Gem theaters, situated next to each other, are Lebanon's third and fourth movie theaters. R.B. Montague built the Gem Theater at 644 Main St. in 1913 and sold it to Randolph Kuhn in 1921. The Gem featured Lebanon's first "talkie" movie in 1929. The Kuhn Theater at 668 Main St. was built in 1936 and today still serves Lebanon's "talkies."

Today the Gem Theater is part of Barsideous Brewing, and the Kuhn is believed to be one of the city's more haunted sites.

Following a fire, the Hotel Lebanon at 631-661 Main St. was rebuilt in 1912. The four-story building featured 77 rooms, but has been closed to the public since 1953. In 1964 the fourth story was removed. Today, the building offers three shops on the first floor. The building owner plans to renovate the hotel into either apartments or hotel rooms.

The Donaca Building at 780-796 Main St. is Lebanon's first brick building, built in 1886. The second floor housed the Masonic Lodge while downstairs provided space for various retail operations throughout the past century. Today, the spacious upstairs remains largely untouched and waits for a new owner to transform it into something spectacular.

In addition to some brief notations about other downtown buildings, further highlights included the W.H. Booth building at 772 Main St. (now Trembl's Jewelry), the Pastime Pool Hall at 638 Main St. (now Kristi's Cafe), the Downing Building at 600 Main St. (now Afterglow Arcade), the Ralston-Miller-Lowe cottage at 481 Main St., the former hospital and library at 626 S Second St., the Donaca House at 764 S Second St., and the Cormier building at 45 W Sherman St. (now Sam's Place).

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PUBLIC SAFETY
From page 13

eluding and reckless driving, cited on LCCC warrant for FTA on original charge of burglary II. OSP investigating crash.

6:48 p.m. - Jennifer Garcia, 27, cited on warrant, Santiam Hwy./Spicer Dr. According to LCSO, Garcia was stopped by a deputy for failure to maintain lane. She was found to have a cite and release warrant for that charge from a previous case. She was also cited for driving while suspended. Report taken.

7:41 p.m. - Dylan Scott Gates, 31, cited for driving while suspended.

Dec. 1

3:11 a.m. - Suspicious vehicle reported in 29400 block Ingram Rd. Deputy responded to find hunter sleeping in truck.

8:03 a.m. - Nicholas Ryan Peterson, 37, cited for no valid license.

9:10 a.m. - LCSO launched investigation into report of "historical sex abuse." Investigation ongoing. 200 block Alder St. Report taken.

9:21 a.m. - Deputies responded to single-vehicle injury crash in 35200 block Rock Hill Dr. According to LCSO, Charles Zeitler, 63, of Lebanon, was driving a Dodge Ram pickup when he spilled a soda he was holding, causing him to leave the roadway and crash into the ditch. Cited for

failure to maintain lane. Report taken.

11:04 a.m. - Maryam Hubbard, 45, of Medford, cited for speeding, 21-30 over, driving while suspended and driving uninsured, 38900 block Lacomb Dr.

11:07 a.m. - Caller reported subject tore off access control panel and attempted to strip wires from former LBCC building. Jerald Lynn Chasteen, 44, trespassed for life and charged with criminal mischief II. Report taken.

11:27 a.m. - Officer counseled juveniles who admitted to lighting smoke bombs in dumpster at church near high school.

11:53 a.m. - Kenneth Dale Gates, 52, charged with theft III after caller reported theft of chips and salmon from Walmart. Report taken.

1:38 p.m. - Walmart reported theft of Christmas decorations and kitchen appliances. Loss \$310. Suspect said she paid \$324 cash for the items in the electronics department, but could not find receipt. Officer will look for video from that department.

4:03 p.m. - Caller reported someone keeps defecating on their property, 100 block W A St.

4:37 p.m. - Caller reported shoplifting at Dollar Tree. Loss est.: \$30.

5:02 p.m. - Arguing couple said they were irritable due to being sober from marijuana for a week.

5:22 p.m. - Two-car crash, 2300 block S Santiam Hwy. Bicyclist pulled into road, causing a car to brake abruptly, causing a rear-end collision.

6:31 p.m. - Burglary reported at storage unit, 36600 block Hwy, 34. Five firearms and ammunition missing. Missing guns described as: 12-gauge pump-action shotgun, possibly a Remington, wood stock; 12 gauge, single-shot shotgun with wood stock; .22LR hunting rifle with wood stock, iron sights, steel barrel; .22 caliber eight-shot revolver, steel with wooden hand guard; and 30-30 Marlin repeating rifle with black wooden stock. Report taken.

6:32 p.m. - Caller concerned when male was talking to himself or the world, saying he was going to kill someone and he's the most powerful being in the universe. He yelled in caller's direction that he hates them and he was going to kill them, 1300 block Kimber Ct. Allen Jess Russell, 56, cited on Clackamas County Circuit Court warrant for FTA on original charge of criminal trespass II.

7:32 p.m. - Brittany Nicole Elliott, 33, cited for dog at large.

10:37 p.m. - Father reported his daughter was physical with him, pulling him into the house after he fell and possibly also kicking him. He was drunk and couldn't remember everything.

10:56 p.m. - Subject threat-

ening his mother, has knife, 200 block S 7th St. Clyde Anthony Rood Jr., 26, taken into custody and cited on LMC warrant for FTA on original charge of criminal trespass.

Nov. 30

1:28 p.m. - Criminal mischief reported in 39300 block Davis St. According to LCSO, this started as a landlord-tenant issue in which the victim was given a notice to leave the property. The victim reported the landlord burned his tent down when the victim did not move off of the property. Items damaged in the tent fire have yet to be identified.

1:57 a.m. - Shane William Wells, 49, cited for driving while suspended.

11:22 a.m. - Fraud reported after buyer paid \$40 deposit for washer/dryer being sold on Facebook Marketplace and seller never got back to them.

2:47 p.m. - Caller reported female yelling for help when a male and female were preventing her from leaving, 2800 block S Main Rd.

4:21 p.m. - Caller reported shots fired toward fisherman in 38300 block River Dr. Deputies responded and determined that male shooting was doing so in a safe and reasonable manner at pumpkin targets on private property and was not shooting toward fisherman.

8:23 p.m. - Cody Olsen, 37, of Marcola, cited for driving uninsured, 30200 block Santiam Hwy.

8:57 p.m. - Callers reported intoxicated neighbor outside yelling, 2300 block Kokanee Way. Nishan Singh, 65, charged with disorderly conduct. Report taken.

9:10 p.m. - Wynter Saito-Hendrix, 20, of Sweet Home, cited for speeding, 96/55, 29900 block Santiam Hwy.

Nov. 29

2:21 a.m. - Shain Hersey arrested on LMC warrant, 2600 block Porter St. Cited and released. Report taken.

4:49 a.m. - Tiara Hoffman, 40, of Sweet Home, arrested on AMC warrant, 4300 block Santiam Hwy. Cited and released. Report taken.

5:17 p.m. - Crash reported in 35400 block Meridian Rd. after operator, who was not named, swerved to miss deer. Non-injury. Report taken.

6:37 p.m. - Motorcycle crash reported in 32200 block Bellinger Scale Rd. According to LCSO, Lani Lill, 53, of Salem, was riding a Yamaha X17 southbound on Bellinger Scale Road, failed to negotiate a slight curve leaving the roadway and crashed. He was pronounced dead at the scene. Investigation ongoing.

Nov. 28

9:07 a.m. - Caller reported broken window, apparent attempted break-in, 900 block S 2nd St.

REAL ESTATE SOLD

Following are Lebanon, Sweet Home, and Brownsville area real estate transactions recorded with the county during late November and December 2025. These are not properties for sale, and some transactions may represent a change in ownership within a family or corporation. Properties are listed by address, property/residence size and purchase price:

315 Shannon Pl., Lebanon; 1702 sq.ft., three bedroom, two bathroom, built in 2015; 0.15 acres; \$400,000.

150 Jadon Dr., Lebanon; 1953 sq.ft., four bedroom, two bathroom, built in 2016; 0.15 acres; \$460,000.

38711 Mountain Crest Ct., Lebanon; 2261 sq.ft., four bedroom, three bathroom, built in 1997; 2.7 acres; \$780,000.

42121 Moran Ln., Lebanon; 1190 sq.ft., three bedroom, two bathroom, built in 1971; 5.01 acres; \$637,500.

3333 Santiam Hwy., Lebanon; additional details not listed; 0.61 acres; \$650,000.

938 Cleveland St., Lebanon; 1474 sq.ft., two bedroom, one bathroom, built in 1940; 0.21 acres;

\$280,000.

32732 Sand Ridge Rd., Lebanon; 1054 sq.ft., two bedroom, one bathroom, built in 1940; 48.91 acres; \$350,000.

300 Waters Edge Ct., Lebanon; 1537 sq.ft., three bedroom, 2 1/2 bathroom, built in 2000; 0.15 acres; \$410,000.

33382 Brewster Rd., Lebanon; 1747 sq.ft., two bedroom, two bathroom, built in 1936; 1 acres; \$389,000.

1111 Hiatt St., Lebanon; 1578 sq.ft., two bedroom, two bathroom, built in 1955; 0.2 acres; \$384,500.

32420 View Ln., Lebanon; additional details not listed; 2 acres; \$235,000.

2615 9th St., Lebanon; additional details not listed; 0.23 acres; \$459,000.

123 Camellia Dr., Lebanon; 1865 sq.ft., three bedroom, two bathroom, built in 2015; 0.14 acres; \$358,000.

810 River Ave., Brownsville; 1881 sq.ft., four bedroom, 2 1/2 bathroom, built in 2021; 0.11 acres; \$435,000.

2671 Stoltz Hill Rd., Lebanon; 1223 sq.ft., three bedroom, two bathroom, built in 1995; 0.47 acres; \$499,999.

80 Oakway Pl., Lebanon; 1654 sq.ft., three bedroom, 2 1/2 bathroom, built in 1998; 0.18 acres; \$405,000.

1790 Main St., Lebanon; additional details not listed; 0.68 acres; \$800,000.

38234 Elm St., Lebanon; 1292 sq.ft., eight bedroom, four bathroom, built in 1890; 0.45 acres; \$350,000.

1019 10th St., Lebanon; 1082 sq.ft., three bedroom, two bathroom, built in 2002; 0.12 acres; \$350,000.

145 Bromil St., Lebanon; 1400 sq.ft., three bedroom, two bathroom, built in 1972; 0.36 acres; \$375,000.

511 C St., Lebanon; 893 sq.ft., two bedroom, one bathroom, built in 1950; 0.19 acres; \$290,000.

133 Main St., Brownsville; 2024 sq.ft., four bedroom, three bathroom, built in 1997; 1.27 acres; \$405,000.

742 Walnut St., Lebanon; 1187 sq.ft., two bedroom, one bathroom, built in 1945; 0.31 acres; \$255,000.

30399 Rancho Rd., Lebanon; 1888 sq.ft., three bedroom, two bathroom, built in 1977; 1.07 acres; \$549,000.

30851 Ty Valley Rd., Lebanon; 1474 sq.ft., three bedroom, one bathroom, built in 1969; 1.08 acres; \$525,000.

590 Manor Way., Lebanon; additional details not listed; 0.22 acres; \$430,000.

1131 2nd Ave., Sweet Home; 1272 sq.ft., three bedroom, one bathroom, built in 1950; 0.13 acres; \$315,300.

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State of the City: Strong, upright, but with challenges

By Sarah Brown
Lebanon Local

Mayor Ken Jackola and city staff presented a "State of the City" talk during a lunch forum hosted by the Lebanon Chamber of Commerce on Dec. 5.

"The state of the city is strong, but not without challenges," Jackola said. "I say it's strong because we keep our eye on the ball and we're trying to find solutions every single day for challenges at the city level."

The city is going to grow, he said, and it's how they manage that growth that's going to matter.

"When it comes to money in city government, there is one thing that really dictates how we spend money, how we manage money, how we move money around; it's called state law," Jackola said.

In the last couple of years, council and staff have become more proactive with the legislative process by going to Salem and Washington D.C. to talk to local representatives. Jackola expressed that every municipality produces some quantity of value, and the state and federal governments take some of that value to their headquarters.

"It's our responsibility as a city to seek those people out and bring that value back here, to retain value in the city of Lebanon," he said. "If they would leave more of the money here, we wouldn't have some of the problems we have."

Jackola believes that being a part of the legislative process, constantly going up to Salem to bring back that value, ultimately pays off.

"It's important that when they're talking about policy-making, the City of Lebanon



Photo by Sarah Brown
Mayor Ken Jackola presents "State of the City" during a Chamber of Commerce forum lunch.

is on the tip of their tongue," Jackola said. "I can tell you now that, at the state level, they know who we are."

When he first came into the office, one of the first things Jackola did, he said, was talk to the city manager about strategic vision for the city; more specifically, how council and staff could prioritize what they want to see the city accomplish in five years.

In January of this year, the council adopted a five-year strategic plan, and throughout the year they've been able to check off the list some priorities they accomplished.

Some current key challenges the city faces, however, includes aging infrastructure, budget constraints, staffing limitations, the Green Peter drawdown, and unfunded mandates passed down by the state and federal governments.

The mayor noted that one

of the things he often tells the state is that their regulatory system is outpacing the city's ability to comply.

City Manager Ron Whitlatch followed up Jackola's introduction by providing an overview of city services.

More notably, the city recently restructured some departments and staffing, and are also reviewing surplus city properties they might be able to sell. The city recently installed fiber Internet, a water fill station and a mechanics pit so staff can maintain the city buses.

The city is enhancing Cheandle Lake Park and making improvements on 7th Street, and recently installed a traffic signal at Stoltz Hill and Airport roads. Whitlatch noted that the city may see another signal installed on Airport Road at 12th Street "in the near future."

Other current or recent



Finance Director Brandon Neish says recent staffing and fee adjustments helped put the city's future financial outlook in a positive direction.

major projects include improvements on 5th Street and Grant Street, and emergency management.

The city is expecting to see a land use application for a planned development by Western University of Health Sciences (here more commonly referred to as COMP-Northwest) soon, as well as "several other large single-family developments" throughout the city.

Whitlatch noted that street improvements are among the city's biggest needs, but also have the least amount of funding.

Looking ahead at the city's strategic plan, priorities include wastewater plant upgrades, expanding the library's Children's Room, reopening the jail, and advocating for Lebanon through the legislative process.

Finance Director Brandon Neish closed out the presen-

tation with an overview of the city's financial status.

While there have been some financial struggles in the recent past, the city has since "righted that ship" with financial forecasts and models, cutting 10 staff positions amounting to \$1.2 million, and implementing a monthly \$18 city service fee.

"Everything the mayor and Ron talked about all requires money, and I'm thankful for the team I have behind me working in my office and all the department heads who work diligently every day to make sure that we can provide the services that you all are looking for throughout your community," Neish said.

Jackola urged more residents to attend City Council meetings and engage with the process.

"That's the only way to effect change," he said.

Survey says school violence a big concern for students

By Jennifer Moody
For Lebanon Local

Students who responded to a recent survey rated the Lebanon Community School District highly on safety, but a significant percentage of elementary students still worry about school violence.

That was one of the key points to emerge from the second all-district survey on safety and belonging, which Supt. Jennifer Meckley reported on Dec. 4 to the district's board of directors at their monthly meeting.

The survey, offered to students, parents, faculty and classified employees, covered five key areas: attendance, engagement, school climate, school safety and a sense of belonging. More than 350 staff members responded, along with 581 families and 1,978 students in grades 3-12.

District officials broke

student responses into grades 3-5 and 6-12. Although 40.4% of the students in grades 3-5 who took the survey said they "almost never" worry about school violence, Meckley noted nearly 24 percent said they worry "frequently" or "almost always" about it.

District officials plan to work on "student-friendly safety routines" and give "how to get help" refreshers each trimester to help ease these fears, she said.

Older students said they mostly or always felt safe at school, but rated the importance of attendance at lower rates than younger students did, "which means our messaging around attendance needs some strengthening," Meckley said. The plan will be to shift from "compliance" to "belonging and future-ready," she said.

Faculty members who responded to the survey indi-

cated they felt confident in their individual schools but were less optimistic about the district as a whole. That indicates more work is needed on transparency and communication, Meckley said. The district also will do more to celebrate district "wins," sharing stories of strong culture-building practices and recognizing school teams who model strong belonging environments.

Of this year's responses, the only survey result that had positive results dropping below 50% was family engagement, which fell from 62% in 2024 to 45% in 2025.

Meckley said she didn't have an explanation, but noted different families took the survey each year, making direct comparisons impossible. The survey did indicate some families felt communication was incon-

sistent, with respondents asking for improved staff response times and more proactive updates about student progress and needs.

Board members took no action on the report. However, they agreed with Meckley that while the family engagement percentage dropped, Lebanon as a community has been vocal about its support of the school district, especially in gathering votes for T-Mobile stadium funding competition. Lebanon earned second place in the "Friday Night 5G Lights" contest and received about \$130,000 in prize cash, which will be put toward the stadium reconstruction project.

In other business the board:

• Elected board member Clyde Wood as their Oregon School Boards Association representative for region

10.

• Learned a new "spirit mascot" for the Lebanon Warriors - named "LW" - will make its debut at a Lebanon High School assembly in January.

• After a lengthy discussion, voted to accept the consent agenda, which included an optional OSBA policy that lays out rules for an educational equity advisory committee.

• The district already formed the committee to comply with a law that went into effect in September, making the policy essentially a formality. Board members discussed the policy at length before voting to accept the agenda as presented. Mike Martin said he felt it was unnecessary and redundant, especially given that OSBA had not mandated its adoption and the district is already in compliance with what it lays out.

Seven Oaks stages 'Elf Jr.'



Buddy the elf (Cyan Davis), center, sings “Happy All The Time” in Seven Oak Theatre Club’s dress rehearsal performance of “Elf Jr. The Musical.”



Buddy (Cyan Davis), second from right, sings a number with Santa Claus (Griffyn Rowan) and the elves in Seven Oak Theatre Club’s dress rehearsal performance of “Elf Jr. The Musical.”



Santa Claus (Griffyn Rowan) meets the Hobbs family who are, from left, Michael (Ashton Silvers), Buddy (Cyan Davis), Walter (Dean Vore) and Emily (Raven Johnson) in Seven Oak Theatre Club’s dress rehearsal performance of “Elf Jr. The Musical.”



The Hobbs family learns that Buddy (Cyan Davis), right, is the birth son of Walter Hobbs (Dean Vore), left, in Seven Oak Theatre Club’s dress rehearsal performance of “Elf Jr. The Musical.” In the center is wife Emily Hobbs (Raven Johnson) and Michael Hobbs (Ashton Silvers).



The Hobbs family and staff at Greenway Press finish out a song in Seven Oak Theatre Club’s dress rehearsal performance of “Elf Jr. The Musical.”



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