

Grants will help repair Long Branch Café & Saloon and Old Post Office in Weston

- Annie Charnley Eveland Special to the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin 06-19-2023



Weston's old post office regularly loses bricks off its front-facing wall, creating a public safety hazard, officials said.

[U-B photo by GREG LEHMAN](#)

WESTON — Weston Area Development Association received \$200,000 for completion of repairs on the Long Branch Café & Saloon after a Sept. 5, 2021, fire and the Old Post Office in Weston with a \$70,000 match.

“Matching funds will come from the property owners initially, but we hope to receive donations and have applied for other grants, which can be used as matching funds,” said WADA President Trish Neal.

Oregon Heritage, a division of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, awarded the matching grants worth nearly \$5,000,000 to Oregon Main Street Network organizations across the state for building projects that encourage economic revitalization.

From Albany and Astoria to Salem and St. Helens, altogether 27 towns in Oregon received grants.

Projects range from façade improvement to basic facilities and housing with awards ranging from \$62,930-\$200,000.

“We are waiting for the Main Street Program grant to complete the agreement process,” Neal said.

They will receive the funding when they have a signed agreement. Other grants are pending, also needed to complete the overall project and they may be able to begin work after July 1.

The Long Branch will receive \$80,000, which must be matched by \$24,000. The Old Post Office building received \$120,000, and must match those funds with \$36,000, Neal said.

Isham Saling and Isham Reese built the Long Branch building in 1874. The structure and business have been owned for 33 years by Bernice Charlton. The café reopened in September 2022 just before the Pendleton Round-Up.



Firefighters take a hose through the main entrance as mop-up efforts continue on a fire at the Long Branch Cafe & Saloon in Weston, Oregon, Sunday afternoon, Sept. 5, 2021.

[Greg Lehman, Walla Walla Union-Bulletin](#)

The café needs its bricks to be replaced if missing and to be tuckpointed. They need to finish the roof replacement on the bar side of the business as well as complete other jobs.

The Old Post Office is currently owned by the Daryl Clifton Estate, Neal said. Since Daryl Clifton’s death in 2008, daughter Stacey and son Jon have been working to save the building, circa about 1885, including through structural rehabilitation, brick work and a new roof.

Although called the Old Post Office, it hasn’t served in that capacity for many years. The Clifton siblings plan to open a small museum in the building once it’s restored, Neal said.

Both buildings are sited within the Historic Downtown Commercial District.

Neal said restoring the buildings will impact the look of downtown and the historic district will remain intact.

“Currently, the city wants to demolish the Old Post Office building even though they do not own the building,” Neal said.

WADA was founded on Feb. 17, 2022, said Neal. Among others, Neal serves with WADA Vice President Sheldon Delph, both who have a long history working in historic preservation and grant writing, Neal said.

WADA was organized as a nonprofit to encourage restoration and revitalization in downtown Weston and the general area, which results in economic development and a positive sense of community.

The website states, “We have a vision to preserve and enhance the historic charm and uniqueness of the history of Weston.”

“The improvements mean that two historic buildings are restored,” Neal said.

“These two projects are a start of what our organization is planning for the future. We are applying for a planning grant to have a professional come in and assess all of the historic buildings downtown for what brick work needs attention for future projects,” she said.

When the assessment is in hand they will apply for more grants and work with building owners to restore their properties.

The Long Branch building will celebrate 150 years in 2023. The Old Post Office is 128 years old.

“The fact that Weston still has a large number of historic buildings still standing is a tribute to the community's desire to retain its unique historic history,” Neal said of the town.

Weston was incorporated in 1878. Its current population is 708.

“While many believe that spending large sums of money on saving historic buildings is a waste of money, it is the right thing to do. Consider it recycling rather than hauling all that debris to the landfill. These two projects are just the start of revitalizing downtown Weston. The work is good for the local economy,” Neal said.

They plan to look at regrouping and working on the Isham Saling House to complete the historic home’s restoration. “Weston has many other historic buildings that can be placed on the National Register of Historic Places,” Neal said.

Explore WADA’s website at bit.ly/3qnPCbk. Reach out to WADA at PO Box 256, Weston, Oregon 97886 or 541-204-0874.



Firefighters continue their mop-up efforts after the Sunday evening, Sept. 5, 2021, fire at the Long Branch Cafe & Saloon at 200 E. Main St. in Weston, Oregon.

Greg Lehman, Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department funded applications that best conveyed the ability to stimulate private investment and local economic development, fit within the community's long-range plan for downtown vitality, and community need. "We have seen the impact of these funds the local Main Street organizations have brought to their communities on projects to date," said Oregon Main Street coordinator Sheri Stuart.

"We are excited to support this new round of projects and the potential to enhance and support downtowns across the state."

Several funded projects will address a variety of preservation needs from window repair to electrical and plumbing, housing increases or improvements, façade restoration, structural and roof repair, new construction and increased and improved lodging options.

The 2015 legislative session created the grant program and placed it with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office.

The legislation established a permanent fund for the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant and provided an initial infusion of funds from the sale of lottery bonds.

The Legislature included the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant in the lottery bond package approved in 2021. If funded by the 2023 state legislature, there will be future grant rounds in the '24-25 biennium. The funds must be used to award grants to participating Oregon Main Street Network organizations to acquire, rehabilitate or construct buildings to facilitate community revitalization.

The program also requires that at least 50 percent of the funds go to rural communities as defined in the bill.

To learn more about the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant or the Oregon Main Street Network, visit oregonheritage.org or contact Kuri Gill at Kuri.gill@oprds.oregon.gov or 503-986-0685.

Retired editor/journalist Annie Charnley Eveland freelances the Etcetera column and stories for the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin. Send contact name, daytime phone number, news and clear sharply focused photos as .jpg attachments to acereporter1979@gmail.com or call 509-386-7369.

https://www.union-bulletin.com/news/local/grants-will-help-repair-long-branch-caf-saloon-and-old-post-office-in-weston/article_60208c8e-0c6d-11ee-8ec0-a702a5791a51.html