



May 21, 2016

The Board of County Commissioners last week agreed to consider placing the question of heritage district¹ formation on the November, 2016 ballot. Should voters approve, the district would operate under Oregon special district law, specifically ORS 358.442 *et seq.* The district, governed by a five-person board of directors elected county-wide, will support programs of museums and heritage societies on behalf of all district residents and have authority to operate and maintain heritage sites and structures, acquire and preserve historical objects and materials and maintain programs of heritage societies operating within the district.

Sponsors are the 15 museums and heritage societies in the county (see list at bottom of the letter). The cities of Eagle Point and Jacksonville, which operate museums in city-owned buildings are associated with the sponsoring organization. Every city within the county will be asked to pass a resolution supporting a county-wide district.

Providing financial assistance to our museums can increase the hours they are open, giving incentive for visitors to stay longer within the county. If every visitor stayed one more day, tourist spending would increase by 30 percent - a \$133 million-a-year gain as estimated by the 2012 Oregon Travel Impacts research report.

We have a heritage of supporting our museums. County voters approved a continuing levy for history in 1948² and public support continued through 2007. Community museums flourished during those years. With loss of public support, the non-profit organizations stepped-up their fund-raising and increased use of volunteers. Despite these efforts, many of these organizations are on financial hard times. Southern Oregon Historical Society, with the largest collection of artifacts and documents, is in debt,

¹ The Heritage District, authorized by 2007 Oregon law (now ORS 358.442 to ORS 358.474), provides a vehicle to create a county-wide special district dedicated to establishing and supporting programs for the heritage societies within the county [ORS 358.466 4. (c)]. Cities within the proposed district must act to join it.

² The enabling law passed by the 1947 Legislature, ORS 358.171 *et seq.*, remains on the books. The continuing levy, however, was rolled into the tax base for Jackson County government as a result of amendments to the state Constitution passed in 1996 and 1997 (Oregon Constitution, Art 11 Sec 11 (3) (d)).

Members of the **Jackson County Heritage Association** are Applegate Valley Historical Society, Big Butte Historical Society, Eagle Point Museum (part of the city government), Gold Hill Historical Society and Museum, Historic Jacksonville, Inc., Lake Creek Historical Society, McKee Bridge Historical Society, Phoenix Historical Society, Rogue Valley Genealogical Society, Southern Oregon Railway Historical Society, Southern Oregon Historical Society, Talent Historical Society, Upper Rogue Historical Society, Woodville Museum, and Buncom Historical Society. The City of Jacksonville (Beekman House and Bank museums) is associated with the Heritage Association through Historic Jacksonville, Inc.

struggling to survive. Giving voters a chance to again consider support of history is the right thing to do.

The Jackson County Heritage Association proposes first year distribution of an historical levy to support operating expenses of its members, to finance a grant program for special history-related projects and to establish a restoration/preservation fund. It is assumed that district directors will carry forward the restoration and preservation fund for at least two years to allow investment in a significant project, and that allocation to qualified museums and heritage societies will increase by 3 percent annually after the initial year. The grant program will be used for needs not anticipated when this estimate was prepared. The uncollected tax estimate is based on 94 percent payment in the first year with 1/6th of the unpaid amount realized from delinquent taxes in subsequent years.

2017 Heritage District estimates

Rogue Valley Heritage District
Three year budget projections

	Fiscal years		
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
GENERAL FUND			
Materials and Services [#]	668,800	688,864	709,530
District Grant Fund	146,795	100,000	75,000
Restoration and preservation fund (capital outlay)	50,000	125,000	200,000
Unappropriated ending fund balance	5,000	5,000	5,000
TOTAL REQUIREMENTS	\$870,595	\$918,864	\$989,530
Resources other than property taxes	0	64,262	138,546
Property taxes required to balance	870,595	854,602	850,984
Estimated taxes not received	55,570	51,276	51,059
TOTAL TAX LEVY	\$926,165	\$905,878	\$902,043
#DISTRIBUTION OF ASSISTANCE			
Applegate Valley Historical Society	\$4,400		
Big Butte Historical Society	\$6,000		
Buncom Historical Society	No support requested		
Eagle Point Museum	\$26,000		
Gold Hill Historical Society	\$20,500		
Historic Jacksonville, Inc	\$13,300		
Lake Creek Historical Society	\$11,500		
McKee Bridge Historical Society	\$5,300		
Phoenix Historical Society	\$5,500		
Rogue Valley Genealogical Society	\$38,200		
Southern Oregon Railway Historical Society	\$13,000		
Southern Oregon Historical Society	\$485,000		
Talent Historical Society	\$13,300		
Upper Rogue Historical Society	\$8,000		
Woodville Museum	\$18,800		
Total assistance	\$668,800		