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# Commissioners OK \$70,000 grant for Lebanon chamber

ALBANY — In March 2023, a car struck the Lebanon Chamber of Commerce building in the middle of the night, causing extensive damage to the 70-year-old former DMV office building.

Tuesday morning, Linn County Commissioners Roger Nyquist, Sherrie Sprenger and Will Tucker approved a \$70,000 economic development grant to help repair the building and modernize it with an ADA approved restroom.

Chamber CEO Rebecca Grizzle told the commissioners the project estimate is \$202,000 for the basic structural repairs.

The ADA restroom and major electrical upgrades will cost more. Insurance will cover about \$180,000 and Grizzle said that leaves about \$70,000 to raise.

She said the ADA improvements are not mandated “but it is the right thing to do.”

Grizzle said the chamber has applied for financial assistance from the City of Lebanon as well and has been fundraising in the community.

Board Chairman Nyquist said the grant will come from the monthly lease of property adjacent to the intermodal facility in Millersburg. Linn County purchased 192 acres from International Paper, sold about 60 acres for the intermodal facility and is in the process of developing an industrial park on the remaining property.

National Carbon (now known as Aymium) has leased 33 acres at about \$462,000 per year for 16 years, plus inflation increases. That money is being earmarked by Linn County for economic development, including small businesses.

Aymium will use woody biomass from area forests to produce high-value carbon products used to improve metals production, purify air and water and improve crop production.

The commissioners unanimously agreed the Lebanon Chamber of Commerce, as well as all chambers in the county, directly benefit small businesses in many ways. The Lebanon chamber has 400 members.

The commissioners also agreed that an application process should be developed — much like one used to help local businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic — as this program is expected to last for decades to come.

The chamber has been working out of the Morley Thomas Law Firm building since the incident. Fortunately, the incident happened at



Lebanon Chamber of Commerce CEO Rebecca Grizzle tells Commissioners Roger Nyquist, Sherrie Sprenger and Will Tucker about the repairs needed at the chamber office, which was damaged in March 2023 when it was struck by a car.

2:21 a.m. and no staff members were in the building.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Had an extensive discussion with Public Health Director Todd Noble about the need for more beds and staff to provide long-term mental health care. Noble headed up Linn County Mental Health Department for many years before becoming chief of all of the county’s Public Health services. He said in his 30 years of service, he has never seen such critical need for beds and staffing. He said this is a statewide issue. A woman whose brother has mental health issues outlined her family’s situation and asked the commissioners to continue to make advances, including developing a local crisis center. Commissioner Sprenger agreed, adding that the Legislature ultimately controls much of the issue, but has reduced the number of beds available for the last 10 years or more.
- Were informed by Robin Nygren of the Linn County Veterans Memorial Association, that the group is building a Gold Star Families Memorial at the Timber Linn Park site. Nygren said the estimated cost is \$10,000, of which \$5,000 has been raised. Gold Stars families have lost a family member while in service to

their country. Nygren said there are only a few memorials nationwide dedicated to Gold Star Families. Nygren asked the commissioners to show support for the project.

- Were told by Dr. Adam Brady there were 62 births in January, 32 girls and 30 boys and 125 deaths. He said there were an unusual number of salmonella cases — eight —and that is being investigated.
- Approved a personal services agreement between Linn County and One 2 Another, which will provide peer services to children and adolescents at a rate of \$30 per hour.
- Appointed Rex Watkins and reappointed Commissioner Tucker to the Budget Committee.
- Were informed by Kris Barnes, director of the Fair & Expo Center, that the facility is very busy, with several multi-day events in January and February and more planned in March. He said January revenue topped \$161,000 and year-to-date revenue through January was \$611,226. He said the Road Department has provided considerable help drying out the warm-up arena after a broken water pipe during last month’s ice storm dumped thousands of gallons of water.
- Approved holding a public hearing on April 16 to deter-

mine if property at 2187 Mill Street in Lebanon can be deemed a subject of waste or abandonment. If so, the county could reduce the redemption period for unpaid taxes as a derelict property. The county completed an extensive clean-up of the property about a year ago to assist neighbors.

- Terminated an emergency access easement grant on Victory Drive, south of Lebanon, since the area has been developed and now meets emergency access needs.
- Approved transferring nine tax-foreclosed barrier strips — ranging from one square foot to 60 square feet each to the City of Harrisburg. The strips total 331 square feet valued at \$1,390.
- Gave Law Librarian Amber Boedigheimer permission to apply for a \$49,300 grant from the Commons Law Center to fund a Warm Line Project for the Linn County Eviction Prevention Program. A Warm Line is a telephone number someone can call to talk with professionals about eviction issues. It will be staffed and maintained by the Commons Law Center in Portland.

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