



July 28, 2022

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Cultural Resource Economic Fund
Letter of Interest for capital construction projects
occurring between July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2025

The Columbia County Museum Association (CCMA) is a registered 501(c) (3) tax exempt heritage organization. Our Tax ID Number is #06-1834021. We are a member of the Cultural Advocacy Coalition. We collect, display and safeguard artifacts and information about the rich and diverse history of Columbia County. We are committed to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower justice, inclusiveness, and equity. The CCMA participates in a number of community activities and outreach programs. We regularly assist business and homeowners in researching how their property fits into the history of the local community by providing photos, documents and electronic media such as websites, walking tours and Google Maps. Sometimes these activities support local governments and individuals in acquiring funding for special developments, projects and grants. Recently we assisted the Columbia Theatre and Klondike Tavern in obtaining Main Street Revitalization grants.

We have an active website with extensive resources and a social media presence that reaches a diverse audience. We prepare programs and speak at various community clubs and functions such as Rotary, VFW, Garden Club, Lions, Kiwanis as well as at schools, churches and community festivals. We research and prepare historic signs for trails and local parks throughout Columbia County.

For over fifty years we have operated a museum and research library in the Historic Courthouse in St. Helens, Oregon, which also houses State and County offices and a Circuit Court Room. The 1906 building will soon undergo significant renovations, and the Columbia County Commissioners have asked the CCMA to relocate its museum, research library and storage to another historic building, the former John Gumm School which is owned by Columbia County.¹ This building is within the City of St. Helens Historic District and will be renovated to maintain its historic features while accommodating relocated County offices and agencies. Planning is underway with a completion date set for 2024.

We will need to provide significant resources to accommodate the County's request to

¹ See attached letter

relocate. We are an all-volunteer organization with a diverse Board of Directors and Curator operating with an annual budget of \$9,000. We are requesting \$500,000 to prepare the site and move the collection. This will include a secure environmentally controlled storage room for our non-display archives and collection, secure fixed cases in our new display area, appropriate lighting, security, and environmental controls in the new public exhibition room. The estimated budget for the entire building renovation project by the county is expected to be \$12,829,105 and does not yet cover our costs to create the specialized systems that will allow us to protect and preserve our collection for future generations. We are confident that should we receive this grant, the county and our community supporters will provide matching resources.

The new museum space will be larger and arranged allowing more of the collection to be displayed. The John Gumm Building has a stage and auditorium that will be ideal for exhibits and programs about local history which we are presently unable to accommodate. We will also be able to display traveling exhibits and special programs, which will greatly enhance our presence as a cultural asset for Columbia County. The new location will be a major improvement for all visitors, especially those with disabilities, unlike our current museum space which is on the top floor of the building with formidable flights of stairs and no elevator.

Security and environmental control are essential for the new museum location, which will be on the ground floor of the building, with large original windows and several access points. The basement area is planned to be renovated for artifact storage. It too must be updated to safeguard the collection to avoid damage from any peril including vandalism and theft.

The CCMA has an extensive collection of artifacts that require secure and environmentally controlled spaces for display and storage. For example, we recently acquired a significant collection of local Native American artifacts that we would very much like to display, but the collection requires special protective cabinets which we cannot provide in our current location.

The John Gumm Building is owned by Columbia County, Oregon. It is located at 251 St. Helens Street, St. Helens, Oregon 97051, served by Brad Witt, State Representative and Rachel Armitage, State Senator.

This is a rare opportunity to greatly enhance an important community cultural resource and make the museum, its collection and its resources more available to all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joanne Pellham, President
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