

for a start-up budget.

"The committee started working with the BLM. Initially, we had no idea of the scope or how big this thing was going to be. We knew that to be successful we needed buy-in from the local community, both the state and federal government and the BLM. Sid Johnson started working with the BLM on the facility size and scope. Mike Wooters took on the task of marketing the idea locally to generate community support. He oversaw the effort to generate local financial support through the sale of personalized bricks and tiles to local citizens and businesses. Since Gary Schmidt was Leo Adler's banker, he convinced Leo to commit to a pledge of \$100,000. My job was to generate interest and financial support from the State of Oregon, the federal representatives that included Senator Hatfield, and Representative Les Aucoin as well as the state's larger foundations."

Working with BLM architects and engineers, the committee came up with a \$200,000 budget for the first year, which would pay for establishing the schematics and the scope of the project. For the second year, their budget was projected at \$500,000, which would fund the construction blueprints and the interpretive package.

Prior to approaching the federal representatives, it was clear the committee would need a firm financial commitment from the state. Neil Goldschmidt was governor, and he was looking for ways to help rural Oregon recover from the tough economic conditions. Chuck attended a number of meetings in Salem, and eventually the state committed to \$250,000.

"That was the support we were looking for to approach our federal representatives in hopes of convincing them that the project was worthy of their significant financial commitment," said Chuck.

"During this period, we were also successful in receiving financial commitments from Oregon's larger private foundations that included the Meyer Memorial Trust, the Or-

the House the proposed budget then goes to the Senate Appropriation Committee for further review and then approval by the full Senate.

"Mike Salsger and Susan Long were very competent at their jobs. They were always questioning the merits and value of the project to the community and to the state," said Chuck. "I admired their approach in that they made it clear that the senator only supported projects whose benefit to the state would justify the costs. I sensed that they were not really convinced that this was a worthy project, and they kept encouraging me to take more time and to try again at a future date. In turn, I kept pushing hard, and I finally had a meeting set up with Gerry Frank, Hatfield's chief of staff. The meeting was at his office in Salem, and Mike made it clear that I had only 10 minutes. It was a tough, tough sale, but after a full 45 minutes, I knew we had a project," said Chuck. "From this point forward, Gerry Frank never wavered on his support. There is no doubt in my mind that this project would never have happened if not for Gerry's support and influence."

To illustrate his statement, Chuck shared a little story.

"As I mentioned, the budget starts in the House Appropriations Committee, and in committee, Representative Aucoin introduced our \$200,000 request into the Interior Department budget. After the committee had debated the proposed budget the committee chair adjourned the meeting. They need to review all the input that comes up with a proposed budget which the committee chair will recommend to the full committee for approval. This second look at the chairman's proposed budget is called the mark-up. The committee members have a short period to lobby for further changes before the final vote," explained Chuck.

"So, I'm at work and I receive a call from Kevin Lynch stating that the marked-up budget does not include our request for \$200,000. I asked Kevin what we could do, and

"That happens," he said, "so to boost community support we had regularly scheduled meetings and updates for the public so questions could be asked and suggestions made. People from Governor Goldschmidt's staff attended some of the meetings, and we had Debbie Kennedy, who was the director of tourism for the State of Oregon come in. We wanted everyone informed. At the same time Mike Wooters was doing brick sales and generating funds. The local buy-in gave it credibility, and that was essential to the project."

Mike Wooters took care of the local fundraising, and Chuck took care of the state

Cultural Coalition Seeks Grant Applications

The Baker County Cultural Coalition (BCCC) is encouraging grant applications for arts, culture and heritage projects from now to December 15. The application is very simple.

BCCC receives a grant annually from the Oregon Cultural Trust to support local heritage, arts and culture projects in the county.

The local grant board has been receiving grant applications and distributing grants since the program began in 2003.

Local artists, programs such as "Chalk It up to Art," local orchestra, children's program, Halfway music events, heritage events such as restoring Hanes School bell, history summer program at Baker Heritage Museum, 5J oral history collection, all have been eligible and benefited from over \$100,000 in grants over the past 18 years.

Grants are typically \$500 and are not restricted to non-profit organizations. Occasionally grants are given in larger amounts where a project warrants critical support. The board encourages grant applications from any individual or group who has a program or project addressing arts and culture in Baker County and it looks forward to receiving creative ideas.

The local grant process through BCCC for 2022 is in two stages, the first deadline

the proper development of the three proposed facilities would definitely be a benefit to the state and their design and funding should be a coordinated, statewide effort.

"Don and Tom agreed to call a number of CEOs and presidents and encourage them to attend a meeting to discuss the prospects of taking this project to fruition. I was not able to attend the meeting due to family issues, but the meeting was a success. The concept was proposed to the governor and the Oregon Trail Coordinating Council was formed as an entity reporting to the governor."

Chuck explained that the

tion that Chuck Rouse agreed to tell his abbreviated story of the role he played in the grassroots beginning of the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center as well as the brief mention of the work he did for the three additional interpretive centers.

"There were so many people and entities involved in this project. It couldn't have happened without the tremendous involvement of all of them.

It is with gratitude to Chuck Rouse and the others who are graciously telling their chapters of involvement so the most complete story possible of the NHOTC's origins can be told. *To be continued...*

is December 15 for grants given in January; the second stage is May 15 for grants given in June for projects taking place before the end of 2022. Grant applications and instructions for reports can be found on the Baker County website https://www.bakercounty.org/cultural_plan/ contact us.html.

Since few grants were able to be given during 2020 and 2021 because of COVID limitations on programming, BCCC has funds left over from those years to support more cultural activities. BCCC

is encouraging applications from throughout the county to receive help for cultural projects in 2022. "This is an extraordinary gift every year from the people of Oregon who donate a match to the Oregon Cultural Trust of their other donations to non-profit arts and cultural organizations in Oregon and from the Oregon State Legislature which deducts the total amount of the Oregon Cultural Trust gift from their tax bill," said Baker County Cultural Coalition board member Alberta Bonebrake.

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