



"Preserving the past for the future"

www.rainiermuseum.org / ROHM, PO Box 762, Rainier, OR 97048

May 6, 2024 Groundbreaking Special Report

May 6, 2024 GROUNDBREAKING! Work on the new ROHM Building has begun

Compiled by Mike Clark



Groundbreaking took place during a ceremony on May 6, 2024. Left to right; ROHM Board Members Tunie Betschart, Debra Elliott, Matthew Alexander, Martha Van Natta, and Sherry Evans. ROHM President Kay Heflin and ROHM Vice-President Duane Bernard. ROHM Board Members Mike Clark and Delyla Laughlin. Major Donor Steve Oliva and Rainier Mayor Jerry Cole. (Photo by Tonya Higgins)

On a day that threatened rain, a crowd of 150 people came to witness the historic ground breaking of the new Rainier Oregon Historical Museum building. The museum was incorporated as a non-profit in 2015, and it opened to the public in 2017 when the city granted the use of a room in the City Hall. A year later, it became evident that the museum would soon outgrow its space, and work began to raise the capital needed to someday have our own museum building. A generous donation of land in 2020 from Steve and Jan Oliva took us closer to that reality. By 2024, the money raised from members of the community, businesses, organizations, sales and funds collected from grants, especially the \$500,000 from the Oregon State Special Legislative CREF grant, plus a pledged donation of \$1,000,000 (a non-cash gift towards the museum construction) led us to the long-anticipated groundbreaking event that took place on May 6.

The ceremony began at 1:30 p.m. at the future museum site at 700 West A St. Master of ceremonies was Betsy Johnson, a longtime advocate for our museum. Invocation was by Pastor Steve Berry followed with remarks by Rainier Mayor Jerry Cole, Oregon State Senator Suzanne Weber, Columbia County Commissioner Casey Garrett, ROHM Vice President Duane Bernard, and ROHM President Kay Heflin. Matt Olson, our contractor, and major donor, Steve Oliva, were introduced by Duane Bernard. The Rainier Senior Center donated their facility for a reception that followed the ceremony where cake and beverages were served. Also, a video of historical images was shown there that was produced by Mike Clark. The cake was donated by Cathy Usher



Oregon State Senator Suzanne Weber (photo by Mike Clark)



Site of the new Rainier Oregon Historical Museum (photo by Mike Clark)

In his remarks, Mayor Jerry Cole mentioned that ten years ago there was an idea of buying a filing cabinet to put all the historical items that was scattered about the shelves of the city library into one safe place. He said, “We thought this would be forever, just a filing cabinet of the history of Rainier. Then it blossomed into what we see today, which is just really amazing.”

ROHM wishes to thank those who volunteered or loaned items that made the ceremony possible: Dave Scott, Dick Heflin, Mike Avent, George and Sherry Evans, Bill Stennick, Pam Burnett, Tonya Higgins, Carol Everman, Robyn Yeoman, Vern Lamoureux, Larry Will and his grandson, Leon Will. We also would like to thank Oregon State Senator Suzanne Weber, Betsy Johnson and Steve and Jan Oliva for their support and patience while we worked through the many obstacles. And we take note of the hard work by each of the ROHM board members and the unwavering dedication of Kay Heflin and Duane Bernard.



This illustration, provided by Lower Columbia Engineering, depicts the new ROHM museum set for completion next year.

A Sincere Thank You



Our groundbreaking ceremony was so successful due to our faithful volunteers and community supporters. We couldn't have done it without people like John Clark of Brim Tractor who furnished the truck and our "stage," or Betsy Johnson* who was suffering with a worn out knee. And, of course, our friends, Sen. Suzanne Weber*, Jerry Cole*, the County Commissioners, Margaret Magruder and Casey Garrett, Steve Oliva* and our contractor, Matt Olson. All volunteers, including Dave Scott, Carol Everman, Bill Stennick*, Bill Harrel, and Cathy Usher who donated the cake. Many thanks to those who donated, especially, Teresa Bentley*, the Eagles and Betsy Johnson*. We also appreciated the senior center and the four or five ladies who gave their time. The board thanks you for attending.

Duane Bernard, ROHM Vice President

*Life Members

President's Report

by Kay Heflin, President of ROHM



Groundbreaking for our new museum took place on May 6. It was so heartwarming to see so many people turn out on a cold and rainy day.

More importantly it showed that our community is interested in preserving the history of the City of Rainier and its surrounding communities. The many hours of hard work it took to get to this

point makes it totally worth it to see the support we have from our community. We were able to raise an additional \$23,605 for our building fund that day. We were very grateful for the Rainier Eagles supporting our museum through fund-raising dinners and donating a check to us for \$5,000. Thank you everyone!



\$5,000 check from the Rainier Eagles presented to ROHM by Margaret Reigel (left) and Teri Sexton (right).