

PRESS RELEASE

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Methow Conservancy Secures Permanent Home

The Methow Conservancy enters the New Year as the new owner of the 3 Bears property and building in Winthrop and is poised to create a new, permanent home for conservation and community in 2021. The purchase closed on December 29th. Current owners Cyndy and Jerry Oliver will retain occupancy of the building through the end of March 2021.

“We are still pinching ourselves to believe this is really happening,” notes Methow Conservancy Executive Director Jason Paulsen. Anonymous, long-time supporters of the nonprofit conservation organization approached him after noticing the For Sale sign and generously offered to help the Conservancy buy the property and secure a permanent home.

“I was, frankly, blown away by the generosity, trust, and foresight of the donor’s offer,” Paulsen continues. “We have recognized the need for more office and gathering space for several years, but the right situation just hadn’t emerged until now. An unexpected gift like this is both humbling and inspiring. It will allow us to focus our resources on permanent land protection and conservation education and because of the unique nature of the building and property, we are excited to explore opportunities to provide community gathering spaces, too. We can’t wait to be able to build community through in-person gatherings again, they are such an important part of our work.”

Since its inception in 1996, the Methow Conservancy has been given generously subsidized space just down the road at 315 Riverside. “We have loved our home at the confluence of the Methow and Chewuch rivers and know that a visible location in town has helped to raise awareness about our organization,” Paulsen acknowledges. “We are forever grateful to Martha Kongsgaard and Peter Goldman who have made that space available to us through the years.”

The Methow Conservancy has grown steadily since its founding and has, for the past several years, realized that more space would help them do more to inspire people to care for the land of the Methow Valley. “We currently lack meeting spaces and our staff are literally bursting at the seams of the building. We have shied away from opportunities like college interns or fellowships simply because we couldn’t envision where to put people. Now, we will have an opportunity to say yes to more opportunities,” notes Paulsen.

The building is currently home to a café and a retail quilt shop. The Methow Conservancy is still in the early phases of envisioning all the uses for the building and for the four-acre property, which provides for some interesting potential for demonstration gardens and outdoor meeting and educational spaces. The property is located just below the Methow Conservancy’s newly opened Meadowlark Trail and within walking distance of HomeStream Park.

“We have time to get this right,” notes Paulsen. The purchase arrangement provides for the 3 Bears to continue in the building through the end of March. “In the upcoming months, we plan to develop a vision that includes hearing from the community about what could benefit our economy and nonprofit sector. This opportunity was most definitely an incredible gift for us, but we intend to move forward with it carefully and with an eye toward how this can be an asset for the whole community. We are approaching this as a chance to create space that is accessible and welcoming to all.”

Methow Conservancy Board President David Schooler seconded Paulsen’s enthusiasm for the potential impact of this purchase. “We’re beyond grateful for the generosity behind this gift. We recognize the new property provides increased space and the ability to make more community connections. It is also the first building you see when you come across the bridge into Winthrop, and this location sets an important tone that this is a community that values conservation. That feels more important than ever during these ‘Zoom town’ times.”

As their plans for the space and grounds evolve, the Methow Conservancy pledges to keep the community informed and engaged. They have created a special FAQ page on their website at: <https://methowconservancy.org/news/entry/office-news>.

“It is not lost on me that the future permanent home of the Methow Conservancy will be in a space that was once home to a quilt shop,” concludes Paulsen. “To me it is a strong reminder that conservation is woven into the fabric of this community and that our role is not just to protect land but to gather people around common values and sew together a vision for the future of this Valley.”