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Church Property Attracting Parade of 'Possible' Buyers

By TOM BURNETT
Of The Star

Apparently, buying a church building – even when the structure is up for tax sale – is not the simplest purchase...

At issue is the upcoming sale/purchase of the Rathdrum Community Methodist

Church building on McCartney Street, a few paces north of Highway 53.

A "steady stream" of potential or possible buyers visited the church building last week, one neighbor reported.

The building was purchased, so the story goes, some five or six years ago by a well-meaning individual who planned to convert it to office space and/or an event center for weddings and the



like.

After nearly \$30,000 in renovations to the 100-plus-year-old building, the economy soured and the building became vacant, as it sits today. As it no longer housed a church congregation, the building lost its tax exempt status.

Unpaid taxes continued to mount and after five years, ownership of the once stately church reverted to Kootenai County.

The building, along with 36 other similarly situated properties, was offered to the public at a tax sale on Sept. 12. The minimum bid was listed at \$12,500 – the amount of unpaid taxes, late fees and costs owed on the building. It did not sell.

At that point, anyone was

invited to make "any reasonable" offer for the building. Bids plus a cashier's check in the amount of the bid were to be forwarded to the Kootenai County Commissioners for consideration.

The winning bidder – if any had come forward – would take ownership that day.

One bid was submitted – and opened – but because a quorum among the three commissioners didn't happen, the bid was rejected, explained Commissioner Dan Green last week. Subsequently, a second bid was received.

This led to the decision, "to reject both and ask both parties to rebid," Green said. Should the two bidders return with offers, the commissioners have scheduled to open them on Oct. 11.

Should other bids be submitted before Oct. 11, they, too, will be considered, he said.

"The commissioners would like to see the building returned to the tax roles," he said, acknowledging the winning bid could, conceivably, be less than the taxes owed on the building.

Those familiar with the stately building concede the stained glass windows, the one-of-a-kind pews and the old bell would be worth "considerably" more than the \$12,500 owed on the structure. While its interior was updated with new electrical, plumbing fixtures and room dividers since the congregation moved out, the church exterior is in need of serious restoration.



Police units from as far away as Moscow, Sandpoint and Priest River, joined police and fire department personnel from Spirit Lake, Coeur d'Alene, Post Falls, the Kootenai County Sheriff's Department and the Idaho State Police last Thursday for the funeral and burial of Rathdrum Ptl. Jonathan M. Franco at Pinegrove Cemetery.

Law Enforcement Gather to Honor Fallen Policeman

Rathdrum Police Chief Kevin Fuhr, his voice at times emotional but strong, spoke well of his fallen officer, Ptl. Jonathan M. Franco during Thursday's funeral service for the 27-year-old officer who died Sept. 24 in a motorcycle accident north of Newport, Wash.

Fuhr told the gathering of several hundred uniformed law enforcement officers, firemen, friends, relatives and family members how Franco joined the Rathdrum department in December nearly five years ago and matured both as a policeman and as an individual.

"I'm not the kind of guy," Fuhr addressed the gathering at Real Life Ministries, "that stands a great deal of formality. I called my officers by name, not necessarily by rank.

"It was Jonathan until just today when I learned he was known away from the department as Jonny Franco.

"He'd come to work every day with a smile. He loved his job, he loved Rathdrum.

"As a policeman," the

chief continued to the hushed crowd, "you often deal with ugly situations; not bad people, just bad situations.

Jonathan – errr Jonny – had the ability to stay calm. He never judged people, never spoke ill of anyone. He just loved life.

"And, yes, he was a gun nut," Fuhr said of the young officer's vast collection of weapons.

"He'd like nothing better than a room full of 40 of his friends, all talking guns."

Franco's sister, Natalie, told of how her brother "would be precise as to time. He'd be sitting in my recliner and say he'd have to be somewhere at 6:42; not quarter-of-seven, 6:42! Or the time he called me, asking if I'd like a deer.

"Said I guess so... He said he had one and could he bring it over to my home. I asked him when. He said he was in my driveway" and that delivery would be immediate.

"Well, we spent the next several hours reading on how to clean a deer. What an evening! That was Jonathan, a heart of gold.

"It's been said nobody's

perfect. I beg to differ. My brother was as close to perfect as you get."

His father, John Franco, relived his son's life from birth to adulthood, recalling one antidote after another.

"Like when I tied my necktie getting ready for work, he wanted his own necktie. He wore it daily for, oh, probably seven months. It had beans on it, ketchup, I don't know what all. His mom asked me to ask him for the tie so she could wash it.

"Ha, you ask him for it, not me!"

In a traditional closing for a fallen policeman, a police dispatcher off in the distance radioed, "Unit 4012" four times before declaring, "Unit is not responding. Officer is out of service..."

Bagpipers played Amazing Grace.

Following the service, an impressive array of some 40 police and fire vehicles – lights ablaze – joined in single-file fashion north on Highway 41 to Rathdrum's Pinegrove Cemetery.

Franco was the first, active Rathdrum police officer to die, either on or off duty.



Lakeland High School Homecoming Royalty Maddi Ray and Bob Malloy take center stage last Friday evening during half time ceremonies at the Lakeland-West Valley football game. Maddi, a standout varsity volleyball star, is active in school leadership roles while Bob serves as student body president. Both are academic members of Renaissance. Miss Ray's court consisted of Darby Murray, Cambrae Stienke, Jessica Quillin and Katy Gibson while Malloy's counterparts were Eric Cooper, Taylor Campbell, Jeff Good and Callen Hannibal.

Bicyclist Takes a Tumble

Matt Evarts had all the best intentions last week; to ride his bicycle 1,000 miles to Boise and back to prove a point – "Never give up," despite any adversity.

In Evart's case, adversity was a softball-size brain tumor and a not-that-glowing outlook down the road. His hope was to raise "a few bucks, not for myself, but the others in similar circumstances. I simply want to prove the importance of not throwing in the towel, not giving up."

Evart's venture, however, was short-lived. Barreling down the infamous Lewiston grade on Highway 95, he went for the front wheel brake in an attempt to slow down...

"The brakes locked, and locked tight. I went over the handlebars and smashed into the pavement, injuring my back, legs and my stomach. Oh, and smacked my head on the hard ground.

"I just laid there awhile trying to piece together what had just happened..."

His bike didn't fair that much better – two badly bent wheels, twisted handlebars and a flat tire.

"Tossed it in the bushes

and stuck out my thumb!" Evarts, 30, said he was able to hitch-hike back to his home in Rathdrum.

"Believe it or not, I haven't given up on my ambition," reported the sore, but determined Lakeland High

School graduate. "Think I'll wait until spring, however, to try the ride again.

"And this time, I hope to buy a brand new bike."

The bike he was riding had been given him by a well-meaning local man.

Spirit Lake Elementary Earns National Recognition

One of Only
Three in Idaho

Spirit Lake Elementary School was recognized last Friday afternoon for having earned a coveted silver certificate in the nationwide HealthierUS School challenge.

San Francisco's USDA Deputy Regional Director Jesus Mendoza presented the award before an auditorium full of students including Lakeland School Supt. Mary Ann Ranells, outgoing school principal Steve Rasor, incoming principal Patty Morrison, Chartwells Dining Services director Kevin Doyle and the district's Business manager Tom Taggart.

There were only three Silver Certificates issued to public schools throughout

Idaho, and 1,200 across the United States out of 100,000

entries. The highest rating – gold – was handed once this

year, to a school "back east," Mendoza said.



Spirit Lake Elementary School Principal Patty Morrison (left) is flanked by (from left) Deputy Regional Director of the USDA Food and Nutrition Services Jesus Mendoza, Jane Green and Myre Lacy of Chartwells Food Services, Chartwells Director Kevin Doyle, Lakeland School Supt. Mary Ann Ranells and recently retired Spirit Lake Elementary School Principal Steve Rasor.

Qualifying for the silver award requires copies of the school's Wellness Policy and Nutrition Verification, menus, four weeks of production records, recipes, ingredients and evidence of whole grain products, a la carte options and evidence of both a snack bar and vended items. Packets of the information from the many schools were submitted to the state which forward the top applicants to the USDA regional office in California. Applications ultimately are sent to the federal USDA office in Washington, D.C. for a final decision.

Schools must apply individually and not as a district.

Winners of a silver certificate received \$1,000 to be spent on new equipment replacement or nutrition-related activity, Doyle said.