

Whiskey makers take over Port site

By Vicki Hillhouse

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First wine. Then beer. Now whiskey.

A startup distillery will become the newest tenant at the Port of Walla Walla's Piper Avenue incubator facility.

Port commissioners on Thursday unanimously approved the application of Kevin and Becky Hetterley for their "Shot in the Dark Distillery."

The operation will move into the space at the five-building incubators currently occupied by Corvus Cellars.

That winery had given the Port 60-day notice, and is at least halfway through that.

Port Executive Director Jim Kuntz said it may be a couple of months before the new tenant opens.

The incubator village was developed largely with state funding as a hub for startup wineries on a six-year lease program.

The state Department of Commerce has allowed nonwineries in the mix of tenants in the absence of winery applicants.

That was the case for Burwood Brewing when it opened last year. Now with no wineries applying, the Port can offer the space to another type of startup that continues to diversify the blend of tenants while still keeping a majority — three out of five — dedicated to wineries.

"That is what's most important is the Port helping these entrepreneurial tenants to get their businesses going," Kuntz said.

The distillery idea came up in May. At the time, the Hetterleys had called it Copper Hook Craft Distillery.

It turned out the name had already been snagged, so they dubbed it Shot in the Dark Distillery.

Their specialties are an apple pie beverage and a Prohibition Whiskey, according to their application. As a micro-distillery they plan to focus on the local market.

Their move into the 1,600-square-foot incubator facility can increase their daily production from 70 bottles to 250.

Shot in the Dark will have six years at the space before it must move out. Monthly rent the first year is \$900.

That amount will increase annually to \$1,806 a month in the final year.