

Local

Joint City-County planning tackles ODOT overlay

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Last Thursday evening the planning commissions from both the City and the County met together to hear information and conduct a public hearing concerning the proposed Interstate Area Management Plan (IAMP) in an effort to get both the City and the County working together on this project by developing recommendations regarding the plan.

The IAMP covers both exits 302 and 306.

“This a new adventure for us to do a joint commission meeting so we may have a stumble or two. Just remember that a little bit of laughter goes a whole long ways,” said Alice Trindle of the Baker County Planning Commission.

Also in attendance were Baker County Planning Commissioners Suzan Ellis Jones, Randy Joseph and Tom Van Diepen and City Planning Commissioners Alan Blair, Ken Rockwell, Tim Collins and Brandy Bruce.

City Planning Commissioners Rob Ellingson and Aaron Still arrived after the meeting had begun.

Trindle began the meeting reading a statement opening the public hearing declaring that first the committee would hear from staff in a report they have put together followed by testimony and rebuttals.

The planning commissions will be making recommendations to their respective governing body, the City Council and the Board of Commissioners. Staff began by addressing the council of their staff report and giving background.

Holly Kerns began by stating, “This is as Alice said, the first time we’ve done a joint hearing and this will be a great way to address some of the issues that in the plan overlap or affect land in both Baker City, the urban growth boundary and the unincorporated areas in Baker County.”

In 2005 an initial draft IAMP project was put together but never adopted. Kerns said it was agreed

upon that “It was time to take up the IAMP project again and look at trying to move this project forward to adoption so there are function plans in place for both interchanges.”

The current project, a twenty-year plan, is being spearheaded by the City County Planning Department working closely with consultants Kittleson and Associates, Segal Planning Services with consideration of input from ODOT. Elements of the 2005 plan were a base for putting together this project, however it has been updated, expanded and revised.

Residents in the areas affected have also been involved and several open houses hosted by Kittleson and Associates have been held encouraging discussion from residents. Some of the concerns voiced had direct impact resulting in changes that were already made to the plan.

Public testimony will continue until a final vote for the plan is held, allowing those who continue to object to the plan to have their voice heard.

Nick Foster from Kittleson and Associates presented the commissions with a presentation explaining the process to develop the plan, different alternatives that were considered and what was ultimately decided upon for proposal to the City Council and Board of Commissioners in the final plan that was up for the commissions’ consideration. Out of a full house a handful of directly impacted residents addressed the Commission.

Karen Yeakley, who lives on Hudson Road, provided the Commissioners with a handout citing her concerns. She also passed around a pair of work gloves. She said, “I am passing around the work gloves of my great-grandfather who taught me work ethic, respect for others property and to leave this earth better than I found it. I have lived here 66 years and cherish my roots and Baker County.”

She noted money spent on a new ODOT facility and the realignment of Best Frontage Road as being of concern.

She enlightened the commission with further suggestions citing that the land in question was rural ranching land, a vital part of the Baker County way of life that needed to be valued. “We live in a flood zone and up until this very dry year the wetlands supported much wildlife,” she said.

She continued to point out that agriculture was a main way of life in the study area. Noting her handout she reiterated that suggestions in the plan were only her suggestions that she felt needed to be on record because those involved in the future might need to know what the intent in the plan was because as she said, “I’m not going to be here in twenty years.”

She also questioned time frames for things such as funding and the lack, she felt, of public notices before the open houses.

Other residents that spoke in opposition were Charles Swinyer who was concerned about the lack of cattle guards on the on ramps from the highway to I-84 as well as drivers unfamiliar with the area speeding. He said, “There has been a time or two they come off that ramp and they’ve been running 70-75 or better, and I pert near got sideswiped. They don’t slow down, somebody is going to get killed. I just hope it ain’t me.”

John Leonard spoke next saying “I’m going to do everything I can to fight this— it just ruins our place. Just bring me \$500,000 and I’ll move away.”

Christine Gyllenberg had questions regarding who set up the interstate management study area indicating that boundary lines were different for the same area on different documents.

Nick Foster addressed that concern telling her, “The interchange management study area was developed early on in the project with the City and the County. As part of the processes and plans you look at all properties that if they were to re develop could potentially impact the function of the inter-



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Karen Yeakley testifies in front of the City and County Planning Commissions.

change.” She also questioned who paid for traffic impact studies should properties be developed, to which she was informed the person developing the property would be responsible for that.

Greg Sackos expressed his concern to the Committee stating he had just received the information that morning and questioned the record remaining open so he may comment once he has had the opportunity to review the material and the procedure for commenting.

Kerns told Sackos that a recommendation by the Planning Commission to City Council and the Board of Commissioners would be given but that would not be the final hearing on the matter.

Sackos also noted that he failed to receive any notice of previous open house meetings despite close working relationships with Michelle Owen, City Public Works Director and ODOT.

After all Public Comment was heard, which included worries over the influence ODO may have in the future granting them too much power in decision making being of grave concern for many, the commission took a short break before moving into deliberations and deciding on whether or not recommendations would be made.

“We need to take a look as to whether we can move through deliberations tonight to be able to have findings so that we can make recommendations to the City Council and the Board of Commissioners,” Alice Trindle explained to her fellow Commissioners.

They had three points that needed voted on, the first for discussion topic was recommended amendments to the comprehensive plans, development codes and zoning maps specific to Baker City and Baker County. Testimony

from the public had shown concern for some of the changes proposed.

Kerns offered some wording changes to accommodate concerns that had been raised as simple fixes to clarify some misunderstandings between the residents had with regards to interchange functions. Another wording misconception that was causing some issue that needed to be addressed was that an ODOT facility referred to a highway or road, it was noted this needed to be clarified to avoid further confusion.

Tim Collins said, “As I understand it the City’s comprehensive plan change would be a statement that the IAMP for both interchanges would serve as the long range comprehensive management plan for providing the transportation facilities and are specifically related to planning changes.”

Collins went on to say that the plan in front of them did not impact Hudson Lane, which they had heard testimony on, and did Impact Lindley Lane for which they had heard no testimony on and he recognized that any development in the area was very far into the future therefore he had “no trouble moving that the City Planning Commission move forward with a recommendation to the City Council that the staff proposed changes to the transportation section of the comprehensive plan be adopted.”

Brandy Bruce made a second to Collins motion with the City Planning Commission voting to unanimously approve the motion.

“That takes care of the City part of the transportation plan,” said Alan Blair.

The County Planning Commission discussed in more detail the plan before them taking issue with several points.

Randy Joseph did move

that the Commission recommend to the County Commissioners amendment of the transportation systems plan including amending the comprehensive plan map and zone maps and amendment of the development code.

Trindle made a second and called for further discussion.

“One of the things I would like to see, that came up in testimony, is before we adopt is ODOT’s exact wording—the of ‘the county shall’ seemed to really grate on a lot of the people testifying,” commented Suzan Ellis Jones.

She asked if changing the wording to say ‘may’ rather than shall as that word indicated a mandatory requirement, was a possibility in order to address the concerns of those who had testified.

Kerns acknowledged that could be done if it was the recommendation of the commission.

Joseph disagreed with Jones and said, “This is like notifying land owners, so shall is not incorrect wording for an invitation to participate and it is my understanding. If there is any access onto State Highways ODOT has to be at the table, staff correct me if I am wrong.”

Kerns stated that was correct. After further discussion regarding ODOT and their role in the plan Trindle, in an effort to move things along and wrap up the meeting said, “There is a motion on the table.” With all commissioners agreeing to that motion except Jones, the motion carried.

Both the City and County Planning commissions agreed to propose to City Council and the Board of Commissioners adoption of this plan.

More hearings will be scheduled before a final votes are rendered by both entities.

Apply now for chain-up helper permits

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) will issue permits for individuals interested in chaining up commercial vehicles during the winter months along specific sections of Interstate 84 in eastern Oregon.

This year the ODOT District 12 office in Pendleton will issue five permits for I-84 in the Umatilla County area; the District 13 office in La Grande will issue three permits for the I-84 Ladd Canyon area in Union County; and the District 14 office in Ontario will issue one permit

for I-84 west of Ontario in Malheur County. Interested parties need to contact the appropriate ODOT district office (see contact information below) between October 1 and October 31. Random drawings held November 2 at each ODOT office will determine who will be offered the ODOT permits.

In addition to the permits issued by ODOT, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation will also issue some permits for the Umatilla County area to Tribal members.

Fire Department to give away free smoke detectors

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October 4 – October 10 is National Fire Prevention Week.

To help spread awareness, the Baker City Fire Department will be making available free smoke detectors as part of this year’s campaign.

According to Baker City Fire Chief Mark John, “We are not only giving them out, we are installing them as well.”

The smoke detectors were made available through The State Fire Marshall’s Office.

The program that makes the smoke detectors avail-

able has been “ongoing for some time,” said John. “We just reapplied and were selected to participate. We will receive 100 smoke alarms to give out and if we go through 100 of them we will resubmit to the Fire Marshall’s office for more.”

That program will kick off on Monday, October 4 to run in conjunction with National Fire Prevention Week.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has been doing fire prevention week for decades.

Advised John, “I don’t remember exactly when they began, but maybe early 1900s.”

NFPA was in fact founded in 1896 and is a global, nonprofit organization devoted to eliminating death, injury and property and economic loss due to fire.

John says there has been a slogan for prevention week every year like the famous “Learn Not to Burn” slogan.

This year the slogan is “Hear the Beep Where You Sleep.”

“Every bedroom needs a working smoke alarm,” John warned. “Having a smoke alarm can reduce the risk of a fatality by 50%. Coming into the cooler weather season is a good time too because

we’ve got people that start firing up stoves, furnaces, and space heaters.”

John said that in reference to fires starting with space heaters, “It is not so much them getting knocked over as something getting inadvertently set against it.”

Anyone needing or wanting an alarm is urged call the department at 541.523.3711 or to go the City Fire Department located at 1616 2nd Street to receive those alarms.

The Department will schedule a time also that they can come to your home and install those detectors free of charge.