

Owner wants end to mine standoff

By Jeff Barnard
Associated Press

GRANTS PASS (AP) — A man who owns a gold-mining claim on federal land in southwestern Oregon asked for help defending it after U.S. authorities ordered him to stop work but is now telling his armed supporters to back off.

Rick Barclay said Thursday that he hoped to prevent his fight with federal regulators from turning into the kind of high-profile standoff at a Nevada ranch last year.

He initially called in a local chapter of constitutional activists known as the Oath Keepers because he thought the U.S. Bureau of Land Management would seize the equipment on his mining claim outside Grants Pass.

Now, Barclay is telling his supporters that the mine is not under attack, posts online by “keyboard warriors” have gotten out of hand.

ROUNABOUT: Citizens have mixed views on plans

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events this year, and the design passed muster.

Representatives of ODOT brought video of those tests and data from four years of study to Sisters City Hall for an informational open house on April 14 and presented them to a packed house of Sisters citizens — some of whom were clearly skeptical.

Queried about whether the roundabout is a “done deal,” Gary Farnsworth of ODOT emphasized that the agency is still in the input-gathering phase.

“We’ve got a lot of concurrence, but we’ve still got a long way to go,” Farnsworth said.

However, all the speakers clearly believe a roundabout is the best solution for the intersection.

The primary rationale is safety. Reducing speed through that intersection to around 25 miles per hour is expected to make the intersection more safe.

Engineers presented data that roundabouts reduce both the number and severity of accidents as opposed to a

STOP-controlled intersection or a signal-controlled intersection. According to information presented by Scott Beard of the engineering firm Kittelson & Associates, Inc., both STOP- and signal-controlled intersections average about five crashes per year with 1.8 or 1.7 respectively resulting in injury or fatality. A roundabout reduces that number to 2.8 crashes with 0.3 resulting in injury or death.

According to Beard, that’s probably due to a reduced number of potential points of collision in a roundabout and the manner in which cars enter and navigate one. Accidents generally take the form of side-swipes as a vehicle enters a roundabout inappropriately. Such accidents also occur at slow speed. That results in property damage, but not much injury.

ODOT representatives have the lofty goal of eliminating fatalities on Oregon highways, and they don’t think signals help them do that. They believe roundabouts will.

That begs a question — which one audience member shouted out — as to why ODOT just installed a signal on Highway 97 at La Pine. Joel McCarroll of ODOT said that the circumstances there

were different, though he did not specify in what way, and Beard noted that that project had gotten well underway before questions about the viability of a roundabout for the freight industry had been resolved.

Some in the audience questioned why the Barclay intersection is getting more attention and quicker action than the Locust Street/Highway 20 intersection, which is adjacent to Sisters Elementary School.

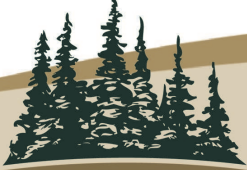
ODOT noted that there have been significantly more accidents at the Barclay intersection. However, City Manager Andrew Gorayeb said that “we have been in ODOT’s ear for a while about getting something at Locust and the highway.”

Gorayeb noted that that area requires “a more complicated set of solutions” because the merger of Highway 126/Highway 20

is nearby, as is the Buckaroo Trail entrance to FivePine and the highway weigh station. He noted that the right-turn lane that was installed as part of the Cascade Avenue rehabilitation project has made a significant improvement.

“ We’ve got a lot of concurrence, but we’ve still got a long way to go. — Gary Farnsworth

It will ultimately be up to the Sisters City Council to formally concur with ODOT’s design and move the project forward. Some local residents want to see some kind of referendum on a signal vs. a roundabout, while others want to see the City move forward in the direction it decided upon in 2011.



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