COVE

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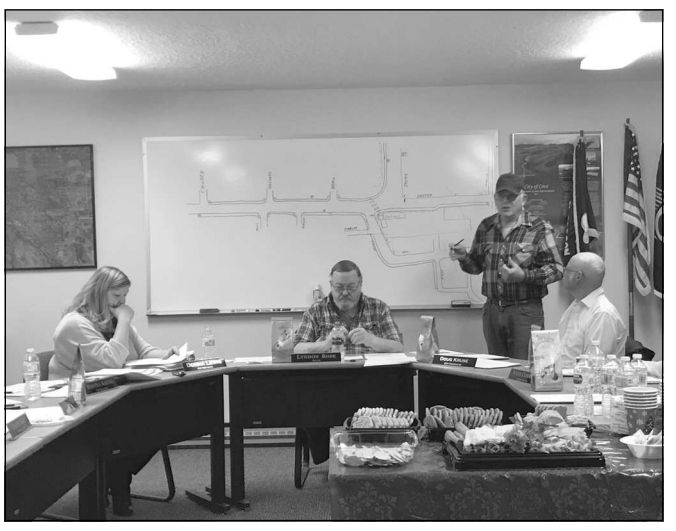
description, as well as setting the salary and wage scale for the position. The council hopes to have the job posted by mid-March, begin interviews by April and fill the position by May. This would give the new public works director two months to train on the job under Brown.

In addition to certifying the election results and accepting Brown's letter of retirement, the council also heard from Brown about the city's first month of the new 18-year contract with Avista Corporation, which is now purchasing the energy produced by Cove's hydroelectric plant.

Cove ended its partnership with Idaho Power in June 2016 and had been selling its power to Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative since July 2016 on an interim basis until the city could find a long-term buyer. Cove and Avista came to an agreement to allow Cove to sell power to Avista starting Nov. 1.



Observer file photo

The new mayor of Cove, Del Little, will take his position in one month. Little ran a successful write-in campaign.

Little, who has been working as a volunteer for the council for the last couple of months, also presented to the council drafts of a proposed sidewalk ordinance and a snow and ice removal plan. Both ordinances were in draft form and were presented in order to get feedback from the council. Little will revisit the ordinances with the new council in January.

The council also approved the purchase of two sets of school zone signs that will be placed around the Cove School District. Their exact placement will be approved by the new council in 2019.

Another topic of discussion Tuesday was the city's request for a special city allotment grant from Oregon Department of Transportation for street improvements. The request was not granted, and the city will reapply next year.

LA GRANDE

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Deputy Chief Chris French. Mark Owens, a member of the Harney County Board of Commissioners, attended all five. Owens initially thought French was coming to Northeast Oregon as a token gesture.

"I honestly thought he was coming here to check a box, but I was proven wrong," Owens said. "He was trying to learn and listen, (and) he did an exceptional job."

Beverage said French's sincerity was evident when he repeated questions from those who spoke to make sure he heard them correctly.

"I was impressed with that," she said.

Beverage and Owens participated in the La Grande forum as members of the Eastern Oregon Counties Association, which is made up of county commissioners from Union, Wallowa, Baker, Deschutes, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow and Sherman counties.

The Eastern Oregon Counties Association was one of a number of organizations and individuals who expressed concerns about the proposed Blue Mountains Forest Plan as registered Objectors.

One concern expressed by the Eastern Oregon Counties Association is how the proposed plan could reduce forest access through road closures. Beverage said reducing access would have many negative consequences. For example, closing roads would make it impossible for firefighters and their trucks to get into a wildfire.

"You cannot fight fires (effectively on the ground) when there are no roads," she said.

The Union County Commissioner said when the Forest Service closes roads, it makes them impassable by laying trees across them and putting in water bars.

"They do a lot more than put up gates," Beverage said.

The Eastern Oregon Counties Association also opposes additional road

Observer file photo

The Blue Mountains Plan received hundreds of objections. Forest Service employees have been conducting meetings in the communities that will be impacted and hearing their concerns.

closures because they would prevent people from enjoying forests for recreational purposes, including the handicapped and riders of all-terrain vehicles.

Beverage also pointed out reduced road access would mean the remaining open roads would become more crowded. This would make visiting the forest less enjoyable and harm the accessible land, which would receive more intensive use by campers, hikers, anglers and others.

In a document submitted to the Forest Service, the Eastern Oregon Counties Association noted the proposed plan seeks to boost elk security by 30 percent. Owens described this goal as a backdoor way of restricting forest access, and the association's document called it "simply a surrogate for road closures."

The Blue Mountains plan's proposed limits on grazing were also discussed. Beverage said grazing restrictions would have a number of drawbacks. For example, she said grazing restrictions, like logging restrictions, allow fuels such as grasses to build up, making forests more susceptible to major wildfires.

"Grazing keeps forage down, preventing large fires," Beverage said. "Cattle can be a good tool for managing forests."

Wolves were also discussed at the forum. Owens said it would be best if the forest management plans do not address wolves.

"The Forest Service does not manage wildlife, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife does," he said.

The U.S. Forest Service will present an updated Blue Mountains Forest Plan in 2019 after considering the objections presented in the recent forums. Owens hopes that substantial changes are made and he said he has reason to be optimistic.

"(The Forest Service officials at the forums) are definitely interested in our concerns," Owens said.

Umatilla County Sheriff's office developing sharpshooting team

The Associated Press

PENDLETON — An Oregon sheriff's office is developing a sharpshooter team.

Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan says the "designated marksman program" is new but aims to fill a need for officers who are skilled shooters to respond to crisis situations.

Rowan says the team is too new to dispatch yet so the first call for a tactical police response would go to the Pendleton Police Department SWAT team and the second to Oregon State Police SWAT.

The East Oregonian reports the Pendleton and state police teams take time to assemble; state team members live throughout Oregon.

Capt. Stewart Harp, who's on the Umatilla County team, says that underscores the need for a local response.

Rowan says the Oregon State Sheriff's Association pushed for sheriffs to develop teams with sharpshooting skills.

BAKER CITY

Continued from Page 1A

French and two associate deputy chiefs, Allen Rowley and Jenn Eberling.

In addition to dozens of local residents, attendees included Baker County Commission Chairman Bill Harvey, Baker County Commissioners Bruce Nichols and Mark Bennett, and Baker City Councilor Arvid Andersen.

Harvey and Nichols also attended an objection resolution meeting Wednesday in Pendleton, and Harvey and Bennett traveled to La Grande for a meeting on Saturday.

French oversaw the session on access, which he said received the most objections. The access session had the largest turnout of official Objectors and Interested Parties. That was the case for each of the objection meetings. Each session was supposed to have a limit of 20 official Objectors, but for the Baker access session that was expanded to upwards of 50 on Friday.

Many Objectors said they're concerned that the new forest plan will result in the Forest Service banning motor vehicles on roads on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

"The whole plan is disastrous for us," Harvey said, drawing a round of applause from the audience.

"You can't close a mine road. A mine road is to a mine and therefore it should stay that way," said Chuck Chase of Baker City, executive director of the Eastern Oregon Mining Association. "We are seeing these roads being closed year after year after year."

Paul Turcke, a lawyer who submitted an objection on behalf of the Blue Ribbon Coalition, a national recreation group that supports the use of public lands, said "the process is broken."

"My advice to the agency would be to go back to what the answer should have been in all those lawsuits years ago and make the forest plans very simple and broad," he said.

During the timber and vegetation management session, several people said they don't believe the new forest plan allows enough logging to reduce the risk of wildfires.

Nichols said during the meeting that French seemed willing to listen and that locals should have more control over what is in the plan.

Based on the information he collected at the meetings, French will submit a recommendation to Regional Forester Glen Casamassa about whether to make changes to the final version of the new forest plans.

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