

Outdoor Rec / Local

County bans pot



Todd Arriola/The Baker County Press

A group of protesters gathered outside the Courthouse Wednesday while Commissioners discussed the new marijuana ban ordinance.

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Shortly after the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation, Bennett moved to adopt the agenda, with a second from Kerns. The motion carried.

As there were no items to discuss for the citizens' participation segment of the session, the public hearing was held concerning the ordinance.

Shirtcliff provided the Board with a synopsis regarding the ordinance, and discussed the issues encountered in Colorado and Washington, including teen marijuana usage and crime rates. He said since the moratorium passed in Baker County a year ago addressing dispensaries expires at the end of April, the moratorium should be passed once again and continued at this time, because the opportunity could be lost to address the issue later.

Part of his argument is that local entities should be allowed to make the decision regarding dispensaries, and he believes that the opinion is in good standing. Shirtcliff believes that the existence of medical marijuana facilities still violates federal law. He encouraged the Board to pass the ordinance at this time, and said that if legislation affects the ordinance at a later date, this can be addressed, and adjustments can be made.

The purpose for the ordinance is stated as a prohibition of "...the operation of commercial Marijuana Facilities/Dispensaries as well Marijuana Producers, Processors, Wholesalers, Retailers and Marijuana Testing Facilities. The Baker County Board of Commissioners find that the operation of these facilities and establishments as described in House Bill 3460 and Ballot Measure 91 conflict with federal law. Therefore, the Baker County Board of Commissioners hereby place a prohibition on the opera-

tion of such facilities."

Bennett pointed out that this ordinance would not cover incorporated cities in the county, like Haines, Huntington, Richland, Sumpter and Unity, for example. It would cover the unincorporated portions of the county.

Harvey explained the testimony process, saying that any individuals in favor of passing the ordinance are given an opportunity to speak first, and then those in opposition are allowed to speak. He asked if any attendees were in favor of passing the ordinance, and none stated so. He asked if any were in opposition, and Carol Free spoke with the Board first.

She voiced her concerns with passing the ordinance, and said that it doesn't have anything to do with her opening a dispensary, because she said she has no plans to. She said that since state legislation has been passed allowing dispensaries to exist, they should be allowed within the county. Free talked about family members who've died from cancer, and the difficulties in obtaining medications, including medical marijuana, and the issues with access in rural areas.

Free talked about the success with dispensaries in western Oregon, and explained the dispensary process and security and access issues and solutions with the Board.

Harvey said the Board has to look at the broader picture, and do what's best for the county, and Free said she can understand both sides of the argument. Free and Harvey discussed access issues, including the protection of children and others, and Harvey said the question is whether Baker County wants dispensaries here.

Shaw spoke with the Board next, and began by explaining the process for obtaining medical marijuana cards. He said there are probably only 25 to 30

grow sites in Baker County, and talked about the difficulty with supplying the individuals who hold cards in the county—257, according to Baker City Police Chief Wyn Lohner, Shaw said. 97 are currently being processed, according to Free.

Shaw explained that licensed growers can currently legally have six mature marijuana plants at one time per patient, and that the maximum number of patients is four, and the maximum number of mature plants is 24. He said that a mature plant is considered to be at least one foot in height, or one foot in diameter. In addition, he said, licensed growers can have 18 marijuana plant starts in their possession.

Shaw explained the large amount of marijuana needed to be processed into some medicinal forms, and the Board discussed with him this issue. Bennett commented that he has personally seen six plants supply a large amount of marijuana, with a competent, licensed grower.

When asked by Harvey whether Shaw supports recreational marijuana use, he said on a personal level, he does not, but that his personal view shouldn't be associated with the medical marijuana community, which he represents. Harvey explained the situation with alcohol addiction and access locally, that it would be mirrored with marijuana use, and Shaw disagreed.

The Board closed the public portion of the hearing, and discussed the details of the ordinance. Kerns moved, and Bennett seconded, that the ordinance be adopted, by reading title only, and the motion carried. Bennett moved, and Kerns seconded, that the ordinance be adopted, by reading title only, and the motion carried. The ordinance was adopted (there are only two readings required in order to adopt county ordinances).

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A little on OR-22



THE OUTDOOR COLUMN
By Todd Arriola

There's been an ongoing, heated debate regarding northeastern Oregon gray wolves, including the question of de-listing from the Oregon Endangered Species Act (OESA), but I'd like to narrow the focus a bit, and talk about a two-year-old male wolf known as OR22.

He was born in April 2013 as a member of the Umatilla River Pack, a pack known to be generally in an area—natal territory—northeast of Pendleton. In October of that year, a GPS-enabled tracking collar was placed around his neck, said Russ Morgan, ODFW Wolf Program Coordinator, located in La Grande. Two years later, this same collar remains in place.

In mid-February this year, OR22 separated from the pack, and later that month, crossed the Snake River into Idaho, stay-

ing about a week there. No collared wolves have yet been documented crossing the Columbia River, but the Snake River has been crossed many times, according to ODFW.

In early March, OR22 crossed back into Oregon near Brownlee Reservoir, and hung around the Eagle Cap Wilderness

area near Keating, until the first week of April. This is when he headed south.

I'm not one to claim to be a psychic in the mind of a wolf, and neither is Morgan, so he said simply that, "Until they get somewhere, you don't know where they're going to be," and he said that OR22 is around the age when dispersal is common. He did cross I-84 south of Baker City, which is also not uncommon, since ODFW reported that this type of crossing has been documented multiple times with different collared wolves. Clearly, neither the highways, nor the rivers, are barriers to a wolf's movements. Ironically, the only known highway-related mortality in Oregon was a dispersing wolf from Idaho, struck by a vehicle on I-84 south of Baker, in May 2000, according to ODFW.

OR22 worked his way south, and as of this writing, he's in an area south-east of Ontario, Morgan said. Not even Morgan can see the wolf's movements in real-time, so for you techies out there, don't expect this capability any time soon. But, the tracking collar does allow him to see where the wolf's been, he said. "The field biologists have been working hard to keep livestock producers informed of his movements in the Ontario area," he said. Speaking of the movements, Morgan said, "They have been impressive."

Many people in Baker and Malheur counties have expressed their curiosity and surprise regarding OR22's movements, considering he's stayed in a drier, desert region, instead of the preferred mountainous region, which offers more cover and protection, and prey opportunities. Morgan said, "He's less likely to stay down in the desert, and more likely to head for mountainous country." There's no other known wolf activity in that area Morgan's aware of.

It's hard to say where OR22 will finally end up, and nobody can predict that, but his travels seem to be not a case of a "rogue wolf," but rather, a case of a dispersing wolf, wandering until he finds a place to call home.

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Saturday, May 2, 2015
Grant County Fairgrounds – John Day

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