

Local

County Commissioners: Changes in Dispatch

• YENCOPAL TO FILL DISPATCH POSITION, BOYD TO TRAIN

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On Wednesday, May 6, 2015, the Baker County Board of Commissioners held its regular, bi-monthly session at the County Courthouse, at 9 a.m.

Present from the Board were Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioner Mark Bennett, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin. Commissioner Tim Kerns was absent due to illness.

Attendees included Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash, Baker County Assessor Kerry Savage, Baker County Road Master Jeff Smith, Baker County Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC) Chair Jan Kerns, Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort (ALMR) General Manager Peter Johnson, Ed Hardt, Ken Anderson, Chuck Chase, Bobbie Danser, Lorri Harvey, Tork and Wanda Ballard, John and Ramona Creighton, and Alice Knapp.

911 Dispatch.

One of the biggest agenda topics—a change in 911 Dispatch personnel—occurred toward the end of the meeting.

Harvey said that Sheila Thompson, Baker County Consolidated 911 Dispatch Center Director, has announced her resignation from her position, effective next Friday, and former dispatcher Jerry Boyd is going to be enlisted as a consultant, to assist with training Baker County Emergency Manager Jason Yencopal.

Yencopal will eventually fill the position half-time and remain half-time with the Baker County Emergency Management Department.

Boyd's daughter, Ruthie, works as a dispatcher for the County, so any required supervising, etc. involving Ruthie will be handled by Harvey, he said. Otherwise, Boyd will be involved until Yencopal is ready to fly solo.

Yencopal will also receive state training, and Bennett mentioned that Jerry Boyd had retired from his position two years before Ruthie was hired, stating there was no conflict.

Wanda Ballard voiced concerns about not using more experienced personnel, and both Harvey and Bennett discussed this topic, including issues with funding, and the fact that the director's position

would be part-time.

They also discussed Yencopal's years of experience with the County.

Citizens' Participation.

Several public attendees discussed issues with the Board during the citizen's participation segment of the session, including Chase, Wanda Ballard, and Hardt.

Chase had some concerns about the number and qualifications of NRAC members (currently 18), and sub-committees, which Ballard echoed, and Harvey and Bennett both discussed this issue with them.

Harvey said that, once the committee meetings begin, which he will be attending, this could be addressed along with any other issues.

The first NRAC meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 26, 2015, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. The goal is to hold the meetings on the last Tuesday of each month, Harvey said.

Hardt expressed some concerns about previous Dooley Mountain road closures and NRAC issues, and Bennett responded by explaining personnel involvement, and what the process was and is.

Anthony Lakes.

Johnson gave an ALMR update, stating that it was gifted to Baker County from private owners five years ago, and he's worked there for the last four years. Baker County Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) funds in the amount of \$30,000 was granted to ALMR initially, which was used on necessary deferred maintenance.

Some of the major points from Johnson includes: ALMR spent \$422,000 in local goods and services last season alone; ALMR paid \$400,000 in payroll, over a four month period during the 2014/2015 season (35 part-time and 65 full-time employees); The ALMR ski patrol is 100% volunteers, and ALMR is extremely grateful to have such a loyal and well-trained group of volunteers; Local lodging partners realized a 30% increase in skiers this winter season, accounting for \$120,000 of out-of-area dollars spent locally between mid-December and March 31; Overall, ALMR was the only ski area in the Pacific Northwest to see an increase in skier visits this season (up 8% from last season), despite a rough snow year; ALMR is helping in creating a destination mountain biking region in Oregon; With the involvement of other mountain bike/cycling groups, ALMR is aiding in the production of area trail

maps, enticing mountain bike recreationalists and enthusiasts to visit and stay overnight; ALMR is currently working hand in hand with the U.S. Forest Service on enhancing existing trail infrastructure; and ALMR will continue the popular "Ski For The Health Of It Program," a Friday children's discount program, administered throughout the winter, including transportation and ski rentals, for \$80, for eight weeks.

Sheriff's Office.

Ash spoke with the Board about a Baker County Sheriff's Office bid approval, for a new patrol vehicle. He said the Jeep Liberty that Sheriff Mitch Southwick used lacks secure storage space. Ash obtained three bids from the local dealerships, one of which is for a 2015 Dodge Special Service Pickup from Powder River Motors, for \$25,817, a vehicle similar to the currently operated patrol vehicles.

With trades and purchases to offset the purchase price of the vehicle, the adjusted amount would be \$6,617. Authorization to use funds from the materials and service section of the Sheriff's Office to purchase the vehicle was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and second from Harvey.

Road Department.

Smith gave the Board a road department update, and discussed Amendment #2 to Agreement #26459, Resort Street and Best Frontage Road Improvements. The purpose of the amendment is to add to the scope of work, increase funding, update contact information, add maintenance obligations and extend the termination date. The excess funding, about \$50,000 according to Smith, would allow for shouldering on Chandler Lane. The amendment was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey.

Smith discussed Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) #30540, Old Highway 30 Detour. The purpose of the agreement is to obtain the Oregon Transportation Commission's permission to use a portion of Old Highway 30 as a detour for local traffic during the construction of the State's paving and bridge rehabilitation project on I-84, Durkee to Nelson Point. The agreement was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and second from Harvey.

Assessor's Office.

Savage discussed IGA Contract #3189, Assessor's



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At left, Peter Johnson, gives his Anthony Lakes report to Mark Bennett and Bill Harvey.

Map Maintenance Agreement, with the Board. The purpose of the agreement is for map maintenance and related cartographic activities to be performed by the Department of Revenue for the County, the total cost of which is \$16,980, according to the document. This agreement was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey.

Blue Mountain Translator District.

The Board received a letter from Beverly Beach, Blue Mountain Translator District Manager, requesting \$5,000 in order to complete a fiber line project at the Union County Airport, which would allow the District to double the number of stations transmitted to both Baker and Union counties (the amount was also requested from Union County Commissioners).

The Board discussed the request, and Bennett moved that the District contact Baker County again after the budget process has begun for the next fiscal year, with a second from Harvey. The motion carried.

Building Purchase.

The Board discussed the possible purchase by the County of the old ODOT building, but decided to wait for Commissioner Kerns's input. With a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey, the Board voted to table the discussion for now.

Sage-Grouse.

The Board discussed sage grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) funding to the Baker County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), in the amount of \$6,000. There was a verbal agreement to assist the SWCD

with the implementation of the CCAA program initially about a year ago, but there had been no official dispersal of funds. With a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey, the funding was approved.

B2H.

There was a Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) Transmission Line Project Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) discussion, involving several of the attendees, and Bennett said that most of the public comments associated with the project have come from Baker County (around 70).

Hardt and the Ballards expressed concerns about the project, and the MOU, and both Harvey and Bennett explained the process, and stated that they're still working to protect Baker County residents, they do not agree with the proposed route of the B2H line through the county, and that the MOU is necessary to stay a part of the process.

The Board approved of remaining a part of the process through the MOU, however, still opposed to the B2H route through the county, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey.

NRAC.

Jan Kerns discussed with the Board the history and role of the Baker County NRAC, which was formed in 2002. She talked about her own involvement, and praised the all-volunteer committee for the efforts in previous years. She said the NRAC is a very busy and important committee, but more help would be needed, preferably with part-time, outside staff, in addition to the members, eight of which are new to the NRAC.



Submitted Photo.

Jerry Boyd.



Submitted Photo.

Jason Yencopal.

Attendees discussed issues with agencies, and coordination versus cooperation issues. Harvey said the hope is to have a full-time individual help with paperwork, etc., rather than part-time assistance.

Economic Development.

Order No. 2015-117, In The Matter Of Appointing Members To The Economic Development Council (EDC), was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey. Mike Kee, Baker City Manager, and Jerry Peacock, Baker County Chamber of Commerce representative, were appointed.

The next regular, bi-monthly session is scheduled for Wednesday, May 20, 2015, at 9 a.m.

Pot amendment fails

Senator Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day) moved an amendment to SB 844, which would allow cities and counties to ban Medical Marijuana Dispensaries within their jurisdictions. The motion to amend was supported by Senator Jeff Kruse (R-Roseburg) and Representative Andy Olson (R-Albany). It failed on a largely party-line vote.

"More than 140 cities adopted the available moratorium on Medical Marijuana Dispensaries within their boundaries indicating they have strong

reservations about what these businesses will do to their communities," said Ferrioli.

"Oregonians have a legal right to grow, possess, transport and consume marijuana for medical purposes, and I intend to see that patients continue to have access to their medicine through caregivers and growers... But I cannot support the idea of forcing communities to permit dispensaries where they are not wanted.

"When the prohibition of alcohol ended, nobody

forced the placement of bars and taverns on communities. They were allowed to decide the issue locally. Up until just 13 years ago, the city of Monmouth was Oregon's last 'dry' city," he said.

"As Oregonians gain experience with legalization, I believe some cities and counties will revisit the issue of Dispensaries within their boundaries, but it should remain a local decision made by locally elected officials," explained Ferrioli.

Walden praises sage-grouse provision

The U.S. House Armed Services Committee has approved a provision in the annual defense authorization bill that would prohibit the Obama Administration from declaring the sage grouse an endangered species for 10 years. U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River) is a strong supporter of the provision.

"A federal listing of the sage-grouse could shut down countless ranches and rural communities throughout eastern Oregon. The impacts on our economy could make the spotted owl look like child's play.

And it could also severely harm our military readiness and national security," Walden said.

The sage-grouse provision was included in the defense bill because an endangered species listing could impact the military's ability to train on key lands. "Efforts to protect the greater sage grouse under the federal Endangered Species Act could hurt training operations at numerous U.S. military facilities in the West, according to a new report by the Army," the Associated Press reported last week.

Ranchers in eastern Oregon praised the bill and Walden's efforts. "A 10 year delay of a listing decision would be fantastic news for ranchers and rural communities in eastern Oregon," said eastern Oregon rancher Bob Skinner, Sec./Treasurer for National Public Lands Council and past Oregon Cattlemen's Assoc. president.

An effort by Representative Niki Tsongas (D-Mass.) to strip the sage-grouse amendment failed. The full House is expected to vote on the bill later this month.