

Local

Public Arts Commission meets

• TERRI AXNESS TO STEP DOWN AFTER TERM ENDS

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
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The Public Arts Commission met Tuesday evening at City Hall. All community volunteers currently appointed to serve were in attendance; Ann Mehaffy, Corrine Vegter, Brian Vegter, Derek Hosler and Terri Axness. City Staff Representative Mike Kee and City Council Representative Mack Augenfeld were not present.

As everyone was arriving and assembling, Public Works Director Michelle Owen, who was not officially attending the meeting, quickly addressed those present regarding the need for some further direction in deciding on options for a trash receptacle to be placed at the trailhead extension of the Leo Adler Parkway. “A table is being donated by the Lions Club, their standard table. But I don’t have a bike rack, I don’t have a garbage can,” Owen said stressing the need for these and decisions to be made.

“In terms of a budget, do you have what we can spend to produce those items?” Mehaffy questioned.

Owens said, “I need to know what it is you want to do and I’ll try and make that work. We’re still playing with the numbers. I guess just get your designs chosen and take them to Natural Structures, see how much it will cost. You’ll probably have a couple thousand bucks to work with. I don’t have a bench either, we do have one bench.” The bench Owens mentioned honors Dave Banta, who passed away recently that has been donated. “That will be installed along the pathway, not in the trailhead area. The garbage can is tricky in the sense that it has to be something we can empty easily and quickly.”

Owen referred to plans she had seen that included a designed lid or culvert as not being ideal in terms of ease and speed. She suggested again turning to Natural Structures to create an enclosure similar to those already in use downtown.

Mehaffy said she would put it as a first action plan to be worked on within the next couple of weeks, get some decisions made and get back with Owen. “That sounds great then I can get some orders placed and feel like I’ve checked some boxes that need checked, even though I have some bigger things to get done,” Owen said.

As Owen left, the final members of the commission arrived. Mehaffy informed the members that were not present when Owen addressed them of the conversation. Mehaffy indicated she would call Natural Structures to set up

an appointment to go over the needs. Her intention is to get two different times in an effort to accommodate all committee members.

“I would like to be there since I’ve invested quite a bit of time and energy into it,” Terri Axness said. She has provided sketches of ideas for the items needed.

Mehaffy then officially began the meeting. Before moving forward with business on the agenda, the commission voted to accept the minutes from the March 17th meeting.

Merry-go-Round.

The first item on the agenda was an update on the Merry-go-round project.

Tom Novak submitted a proposal which addressed the idea of the “graffiti alley” that was discussed at the last meeting.

“I think creating this is a great idea,” said Derek Hosler. “I happened to be working in the alleys the last couple of days and I’ve noticed graffiti—and it’s not even attractive. The paint job to try and cover it up is even worse.”

The group discussed the idea inviting graffiti artists to a round table conversation about the idea. Most of the projects the Public Arts Commission is organizing revolve around local artists.

“All the projects that the Public Arts Committee is involved in deal first and foremost with local artists. This would be something where it could be invited artists to take part in something, and like the one in Boise, it’s ever-changing. It’s for a period of one year or something like that. Everyone that is involved knows that it’s going to change on an annual basis,” Brian Vegter said.

“I am more than happy to entertain the idea of the mural project; it’s just that it’s one more thing and I think we need to chip away a bit at some of these other things and get them taken care of first,” Mehaffy said.

The commission then returned to the Merry-go-round itself, in which Novak suggested bird and animal bronze figures in addition to the children figures.

All thought the addition of birds and animals was a good idea not previously included.

The question was raised as to whether or not the two artists who had previously submitted proposals had been contacted regarding the committees request that they collaborate on the project.

Vegter indicated they had and that was still being worked out. With the addition of Novak’s ideas further discussions regarding collaborations would need to be had and that it seemed to him that the proposal and development phase was not over. He personally was open to more ideas before deciding on one concrete plan as the commission likes elements



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

L-R Corrine Vegter, Derek Hosler, Terri Axness, Ann Mehaffy and Brian Vegter.

from all submitted proposals but doesn’t feel any one has captured the vision completely.

“We will continue to steer this project,” Vegter said.

“If we could put together sketches or a model to take out to the community, to the organizations so we can talk about public art in Baker. Having something to show the community to build excitement and enthusiasm, then we can start raising funds to make things happen,” Mehaffy added.

Vinyl Wrap Project.

The commission then turned its attention to the vinyl wrap project. The idea there is to “wrap” necessary but unattractive things like electrical boxes with art by local artists.

Costs involved need to be determine but the ideas is that the artists contributing the art and designs for the wraps will allow the use of their art with the understanding that they will be credited for their work and be allowed to advertise with information about their work by including links to websites that showcase and sell their work and possibly even a way to scan a QR code from a mobile phone for information as well.

Mehaffy lightheartedly coined the project, “It’s a wrap.”

Inmate Collaboration.

On March 25, 2015 the commission had a luncheon at Powder River Correctional Institution with officials to inquire about possible future collaborations between inmates and the commission. Mehaffy indicated that the prison administration was very receptive to the idea.

“They need enhanced vocational training programs, post release skills programs and even community service programs,” she said.

According to Mehaffy and Hosler, the woodworking and welding shops the prison offers were fabulous and could be used to create some exceptional work, the welding shop can even produce laser cuts.

The possibilities of this venture were exciting to the commission. There are no immediate plans on the table, however there was discussion of utilizing the prison inmates on the Merry-go-round project in the near future.

Corinne Vegter com-

mented, “They are very eager to do stuff regularly. One thing is that they make things for fundraisers. Something to maybe think about is to have them make some things to present as fund raising to help push forward the arts commission.”

There was also mention of the commission working with Baker Technical Institute at the High School to complete projects providing students with “real world” experiences. The commission also addressed the fact that July is public art awareness month. Crossroads is already making plans to participate with a transient art demonstration, no definite details were available at the meeting.

Chalk.

“Chalk It Up” where artist create sidewalk art with chalk is also scheduled for July.

Other ideas to infuse art into our community during that time were discussed although nothing definitive was decided upon. More information about these events will be discussed at a later meeting with decisions being made as to what ideas will be incorporated. The final detail of the meeting was a quick discussion about the master plan.

Mehaffy was going to scan into her computer and email out a copy of a plan in which they will model. At the next meeting she expects to finalize details concerning the plan.

Terri Axness.

As the meeting was concluding Terri Axness informed the commission that her term has expired and it was not her intention to continue on.

“I think that you guys need some other resources, fresh insights. I would like to be involved in whatever but I feel a new commissioner is needed. I am very dedicated to Public Art in Baker, as you all know. I would like to stay on the committee to finish this park and I’d like to be involved in the Merry-go-round project,” she said.

Axness did express willingness to continue her involvement on some level. The Public Arts Commissioners seemed disappointed at her news. According to Axness, Mike Kee indicated he would be collecting applications to replace her.

Locals travel to Sugar Pine

BY KERRY McQUISTEN
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One member of the Baker County Oath Keepers, who declined an interview, as well as Alex Sealey, President of Oregon III Percenters, recently traveled to the Sugar Pine Mine in Josephine County. The owners of that mine and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are facing off in a legal battle, which came to a head about three weeks ago.

According to Jake Brown of the local Oath Keepers, “Oath Keepers, III Percenters, and any other liberty focused Americans” have been on site for the last three weeks. All involved stress emphatically that the situation in southwest Oregon is not a Bundy Ranch-style standoff by any means. Due to a cease and desist letter issued by the BLM prior to the Sugar Pine Mine’s upcoming hearing in court, the mine’s owners fear that the BLM will come onto the site and confiscate equipment before the case can be sorted out legally.

The mine was discovered in 1858 with the current title originating in 1876, making it the oldest active mine in Oregon.

The BLM says that the 1870s mining law under which the mine operated, changed in the mid-1950s. At that time, they say, the owners lost their surface rights while maintaining mineral rights. In 1961, they argue, the Sugar Pine’s surface rights were ceded back to the BLM.

Co-owners Rick Barclay and George Backes state that the BLM is incorrect and they indeed have paperwork showing proof of their continued ownership of the surface rights as well the mineral rights.

Mineral rights involve the legal ability to extract minerals beneath the surface of the earth. Surface rights involve the ability to operate across the surface of the ground, which would include the building and location of structures, travel across the mining claim, etc.

The local Oath Keepers say those wishing to donate supplies or funds can call Richard at 541-523-1533 or go online to http://oathkeepersjoco.com/Articles/Status/supply_request.php.

Oath Keepers and III Percenters state they will simply be on site to guard the mine’s property and equipment until due process has played out one way or the other in court. The national group stated that their staging area is carefully monitored, and those looking for a militia-type confrontation will be turned away.

The Sugar Pine Mine will be the discussion topic on the World Gone Crazy radio show this Sunday, 9 p.m. on 1490 AM, KBKR.

Ash sworn in

BY TODD ARRIOLA
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At 3 p.m. Wednesday, April 29, Lieutenant Travis Ash was sworn in at the Baker County Courthouse by County Clerk Cindy Carpenter, as the new County Sheriff, effective May 1st.

Present for the ceremony, held in the Commission Chambers, were around 20 people, including Ash’s wife, Katie, their two children, Josie and Justin, outgoing Sheriff Mitch Southwick, County Commissioners Bill Harvey and Mark Bennett, and many Sheriff’s Deputies.

Carpenter administered the Oath to Ash, and both signed the document immediately afterward, followed by congratulations from the attendees.

“I’m looking forward to this opportunity,” said Ash.

Ash’s oath is as follows: “I, Travis Ash, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States of America, and the Constitution of the State of Oregon, and the law thereof, and will faithfully, honestly, and impartially demean myself in the office of Sheriff to which I’ve been appointed, to the best of my ability, so help me God. This swearing in is effective as of May 1, 2015.”

On Thursday, Ash issued a memo to the department and all its staff informing them all Lexipol policies and procedures currently in place will remain in place.

Within the next two weeks, Ash plans to swear in the Sheriff’s Deputies, he said. This process takes place each time there is a new appointment or a reappointment for Sheriff. New I.D. cards will also be issued at that time.

Ladies bridge winners

The Quail Ridge Ladies Day bridge winners were announced for April. Golf scores were unavailable.

The April 15 bridge winners are: 1st Della Steele, 2nd Konnie McManus, 3rd Ginny Kostol.

The April 22 winners were: 1st Betty Combs, 2nd Marlene Cross, 3rd Janice Smull.

The April 29 winners were: 1st Della Steele, 2nd Jean Heizer, 3rd Nancy Ferree.

Haggen transition shuts Albertsons two days

Temporary store closures have been announced for the transition of the Baker City Albertsons on Campbell to Haggen.

6 p.m., Thursday, May 14 - Baker City Albertsons Store closes; 12:01 a.m.,

Friday, May 15- Haggen takes ownership of the store; 4 p.m. *, Saturday, May 16 - Store opens as Haggen. The pharmacy will remain open during the conversion starting late morning May 15.

Haggen will hold a community meeting, 5-6 p.m., Tuesday, June 30 at the Baker County Conference and Event Center. With each store opening, Haggen will partner with five local non-profits and will

give \$1,000 to a single organization to which the store opens. Several months after the store is converted, Haggen will donate 2% of sales on four Saturdays to four local, non-profit organizations.

BMTD goes digital

The Blue Mountain Translator District on Monday, May 4th, converted the last analog channel (KPDx) to digital. With this conversion we also began broadcasting Boise’s 24/7 news and the Justice Network from Mt. Fanny. Customers may have to re-scan their televisions. See www.bmtd.org for more information or call the district 541.963.0196 or 541.406.4900. BMTD thanks the community for its support.