

Local

City Council: Langrell, Kee, Owen clash over City's contract services decisions

• TREE BOARD TO EXPAND BY TWO, VEGETATION MANAGEMENT POLICY APPROVED

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
Gina@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Tuesday evening, Mayor Mosier called the usual Baker City Council meeting to order followed by the pledge of allegiance and invocation led by Councilor Augenfeld.

City Recorder Luke Yeaton called roll with Councilors Downing, Abell, Thomas, Augenfeld, Langrell and Mayor Mosier answering present. Merrill was not present at the meeting.

Mosier indicated she had been contacted prior to the meeting by Merrill who informed her he was not able to attend the meeting.

Mosier called for any citizen participation—there was none.

Council then moved forward with the agenda.

Council Support of Regional Housing Rehabilitation Project.

City Manager Mike Kee gave council information regarding this proposal. Community Connections Northwest along with Union County is applying for a community development block grant in order to rehabilitate low income or elderly persons' homes in Baker, Union, Wallowa and Grant Counties.

Community Connections is seeking Mosier's signature on a letter of support of the project.

A similar grant that was sought out last year but was unsuccessful in being obtained.

Council was supplied with background information on the grant including statistics showing Baker County has a higher than average poverty rate, sitting approximately 100 homes in Baker County that lack plumbing facilities and 200 that lack complete kitchens.

Information provided to Council also included portions of the grant applica-

tion for their review.

Kee advised that the program makes 0% interest deferred payment loans to low and moderate income home owners based on priorities such as outdated heating systems, improper and or heating inefficiencies, structural issues such as roofing or foundation issues and elderly and handicap with accessibility needs.

As the loans are paid back they will fund a revolving fund that will provide additional rehabilitation.

Loans will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Baker City has some history with housing rehabilitation grants.

Kee advised, "Most of the loans I have been involved with were mostly for energy efficiency, the repayment of those loans become due when the homes sell."

Several have come due in recent years and the money goes into a fund City Council can vote on how to use.

Langrell motioned for acceptance for the Mayor to sign the letter with a second by Councilor Downing a unanimous vote followed.

Ordinance #3344 – Proposed Changes to Tree Board: First Reading.

The Tree Board has requested that the board be expanded to include seven members instead of five in an effort to spread the tasks among members and make the board more effective. Several of the members also work full-time and addition of members would help the board be more effective.

Also missing from wording in the ordinance creating the Tree Board was wording that is in other board and commissions stating that if a member misses three meetings unexcused that person can lose their seat on that board.

Before Kee read the Ordinance in its entirety Downing asked if there was specific wording

requiring that members of the board live within the city limits.

Kee said there was not. Kee read the Ordinance, after which Abell made a motion to accept the reading with a second by Augenfeld.

All Councilors voted to accept the first reading and then all voted to have a second reading by title only.

Kee read for a second time the ordinance by title only.

Abell again motioned that the Council accept the second reading that was seconded by Councilor Downing.

Again council voted to unanimously accept the reading. Mosier advised that a third and final reading would be had at the next Council Meeting.

Award of GIS Services Contract.

Michelle Owen, Public Works Director, addressed Council on a project that the city has been working on for a couple of years starting a GIS program.

"We are starting from the ground floor. A couple of years ago we did a mobile scan. We hired a firm that drove around the entire town, kind of like Google Earth and captured all that data for Baker City.

"Now we want to transfer not only that data but our auto cad data, which is our line drawings for water, waste water and storm water systems and put this all into GIS which is going to be an easier way to access the information," she said.

The County parcel maps will also be included and OTEC will also be involved so the City can gather information for a street light inventory.

The City also plans to have a street sign inventory as part of this system. Having all the information together in a GIS system will be extraordinarily beneficial according to Owen. Since this is new to us we have asked consultants to submit proposals to help us get started.

"There were two of the nine received proposals

that we got past the deadline but roads were closed due to fires so I chose to accept them regardless," she said.

City Engineer Doug Schwinn and Owen scored the proposals for the project.

She added, "While price is always a concern we looked primarily at company and individual experience. For this project we really want to make sure we get the firm that serve us the best."

The firm Owen recommended based on scores her and Schwinn awarded was Erlandsen and Associates for \$20,790.

Erlandsen and Associates will also provide training to City staff regarding data input and conversion into the GIS system for which Owen was confident her staff would be able to do once trained.

Owen also offered extensive time spent with the firm adding confidence to her choice.

Langrell, concerned with price differences among the proposals stated, "With one of the UV things you recently had a bunch of electrical work done, I know that Baker Electric was the low bidder on that—and they didn't come up and schmooze you and they have a lot more experience in the particular type of electrical stuff than the firm that you chose to hire.

"I kind of wonder if Langan Treadwell (another firm with a bid almost \$9,000 less) had kind schmoozed you a little and answered your questions, they could have possibly scored a little higher."

Langan Treadwell Rollo was the next choice for the bid award.

"I think I can answer that, Councilor," Kee said. "No. That wouldn't have made a difference. Now if you have some kind of question about how these were scored, talk to me about it. And you're statement about Baker Electric being most qualified for that job is not true."

Langrell rebutted saying, "Well, actually it is."

Kee replied, "No, it's

not."

Langrell then offered, "If you'd like to bring Ross (from Baker Electric) up here, he could sure explain it to you."

Kee then stated, "If you have a problem with the way things were scored come talk to me about it. I'll explain it to you."

Langrell asked Kee, "Did you score them?"

Owen broke into the argument saying, "Doug Schwinn and I scored them and I'll just comment that the proposal document is the document by which we grade and judge these firms."

Elements considered, according to Owen, were a signed signature sheet agreeing to the terms, firm qualifications for 35 points, individual qualifications for 20 points, a timeline for 20 points and cost for 15 points

With the \$20,790 bid, Owen says they are still well within the \$30,000 that was budgeted for this expense.

Langrell asked Owen if the all of firms were scored prior to speaking with them.

She advised that they were not, but the firms that took an interest and spoke with both herself and Schwinn attempting to gain deeper understanding of what was trying to be accomplished put together in Owens words "a better proposal."

After a bit more discussion, Downing moved to award the proposal to Erlandsen and Associates for \$20,790.

A second was made by Thomas

A vote of 5:1 resulted with Langrell being the only Councilor to oppose.

Vegetation Management Policy Approval.

Owen again addressed Council speaking to the work that the parks board had done in response to community concern in concern to the spraying of chemicals in our City Parks.

Owen explained staff researched various communities put together a plan the plan went to the

Parks Board for review where some modifications were made.

Before Council was the modified vegetation plan for the City of Baker City the Parks Board approved.

"It does allow for certain areas to be herbicide free zones," said Owen.

In addition to the South Baker Park that is entirely herbicide free, "There are no chemicals applied."

Owen also spoke a list that is available more easily than in the past of products used. She said, "It has changed a bit in the plan just so you are aware."

New signage requirements are more clearly defined in the plan that had been decided upon as well as an email notification system has been created.

Signs are to be clearly posted 24 hours in advance and will remain up for a period of time post application to notify those with sensitivities so they can limit or avoid exposure.

Downing moved to approve the vegetation plan with a second by Abell.

Before the final vote Augenfeld stated, "I think this is a good document and it is an improvement but I just want to go on record saying that I don't think it is a good policy to use toxic substances for atheistic purposes but I'm trying to be realistic."

The vote, however, was unanimous.

City Manager/Director Comments.

Kee had nothing further for the Council and neither did Owen.

Council Comments.

Mayor Mosier noted that the dedication ceremony for the bandstand was held the past weekend and urged the community to go take a look at the beautiful structure that had been "a long time coming."

Owen mentioned that part of the area was blocked off due to reseeding and suggested the structure be appreciated but the reseeded area be avoided for now.

With that, Mosier then adjourned the meeting.

OTEC to assist wildfire victims

• CANYON CREEK, WINDY RIDGE HOME LOSS VICTIMS' RECONNECT RATES WAIVED

Baker City, Ore (OTEC) This morning, in order to assist OTEC members recovering from the effects of the wildfires of 2015,

OTEC's Board of Directors, in a specially called board meeting, unanimously voted and passed an amendment to Tariff No. 1, Rule E, Section C, allowing that all forty-three homes and fifty structures destroyed in the Cornet-Windy Ridge and Canyon Creek Complex wildfires would be exempt from any rates and fees

related to the re-establishment of electrical services.

"We, as a board, have been closely monitoring the destruction of the wildfires over the past month and knew that when the time came to rebuild, we would work collectively to reach out and help our neighbors in their time of need," said Grant County board member, Gary Miller. "This is a historical decision that will go into effect immediately."

The waiver of OTEC tariff rules is retroactive to the start date of the wildfires and valid for a 24-month period, beginning August 12, 2015.

The caveats are that members must take electric service from the same location as existed prior to the wildfire destruction and the exemption is not trans-

ferable to a new owner of the effected property.

"The beauty of a not-for-profit electric cooperative vs. an investor owned utility is that we have the strength of our shared membership and can lend a hand when it is needed most," explained Union County board member and president, George Galloway. "Given the severity of the damages and the devastation experienced by our members in Baker and Grant County, this was simply the right thing to do."

Over the next few weeks, OTEC will be reaching out to contact members who were affected by the wildfires, providing information and helping them to re-establish electrical service.

Walden to hold town hall meetings

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River) will hold public meetings next week to listen to eastern Oregon communities about preventing and fighting catastrophic wildfire.

Agency officials will be on hand in Canyon City, Baker City, and Enterprise to give an update to Walden and community members about recovery efforts.

Fires have burned throughout Oregon this summer. In Baker and Grant counties alone, the Cornet/Windy Ridge and Canyon Creek Complex fires have burned a combined total of over 213,000 acres and destroyed 47 homes.

At the town halls, Walden will also give an update on legislation he has championed in the House—the Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015—to reform federal forest policy and prevent wildfire.

These town halls in Lakeview, Canyon City, Baker City, and Enterprise will be his 24th through 27th of 2015.

On Tuesday, Walden will meet county commissioners in La Grande, where the Eastern Oregon Counties Association will honor him for his work to reform federal forest policy and prevent catastrophic wildfire.

Monday, September 14, 2015:

Grant County Fire Town Hall, 5:15 p.m. at the Canyon City Community Center, 123 South Washington Street, Canyon City.

Tuesday, September 15, 2015:

Baker County Fire Town Hall, 8:00 a.m. at the Sunrise Inn, in Baker City.

