

Local

Public Arts Commission discusses graffiti incident



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

The Public Arts Commission met Tuesday, partly overlapping with the executive session of City Council, to discuss the “Movie Mouse” controversy surrounding the graffiti ordinance.

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
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The Public Arts Commission meeting was called to order and the group unanimously voted to approve minutes from the last meeting.

Ann Mehaffy, Chair, asked if anyone objected to a change in the published agenda moving the discussion of the Movie Mouse to the first item on the agenda as City Manager Mike Kee, city staff representative, needed to attend an Executive Session City Council meeting and one of the Eltrym owners, Dan McQuisten, was present.

Hearing no objections, Mehaffy looked to commission member Brian Vegter to begin the discussion.

“Well, I was asked by Mayor Mosier if we would talk to Council about rewording the ordinance (on graffiti) so there could be room for interpretation as in the case of the movie rat so that if something was created in a place that was appropriate for the business, the business owner could elect to keep it,” he said.

Mehaffy asked, “Did we decide to do this as a commission or is this just you as a person?”

Vegter jokingly said that he believed the commission had agreed to disagree but in a previous vote he cited a 3:2 result in favor of allowing a business to keep something they like.

That being the recommendation, they chose to present to Council.

Kee indicated the Council was looking for

guidance as far as if they should allow flexibility in the ordinance.

Mehaffy felt that there was definitely a need for a change, “Because there shouldn’t be such punitive action toward the owner when they did not do it. Really they are the victim. In any other ordinance the victim is not fined or charged with anything. That is thing I find unacceptable.”

According to Kee, the ordinance as is sets now is pretty firm not allowing anything to be done other than exactly what it says. Kee explained that police officers use discretion all the time citing getting pulled over for speeding or a seatbelt violation and not getting a ticket as an example, but continuing on saying with the way this ordinance is written it does not allow for officer discretion and so police must follow that ordinance regardless.

Kee explained the procedure stating the City will go out make contact with a business owner give them 14 days to remove the graffiti then if the owner fails to comply a citation is issued.

Owners have an option to utilize the juvenile department, kids that need to perform community service, to paint over the graffiti matching the building color as close as possible at no cost so for the “victim” there are options to help with compliance.

Kee stated that in looking at changes to the ordinance he felt the City Attorney would suggest someone be able to judge content

and Mehaffy felt that was something the committee could help with.

It was agreed that Vegter go to Council and state the commission’s position for rewording the ordinance, and extending willingness to help with decisions regarding “nuisances.”

The discussion regarding public art ensued for quite some time encompassing issues that have arisen from Chalk it up to Art, to the possibility of local artists, who as Vegter put it sometimes get fed up with red tape, erecting unsolicited sculptures.

Mehaffy ended the conversation saying that “the mission of this Commission is to promote and encourage art for the public and I think that fits within our mission to act as a coordinator between the city with ordinances and the public.”

The commission then moved forward with the agenda, with Kee having left.

Mehaffy stated she did not know much about the Leo Adler Memorial Parkway Project and was not able to speak to that so the committee agreed to skip the agenda item.

They next addressed the Vinyl wrap project.

Derek Hosler mentioned that with the knowledge that OTEC had said no to the idea, he approached Charlie Chase, who is on the board, with the idea and informed her that OTEC had said no.

Hosler said Chase seemed surprised that the idea had been rejected and Hosler suggested to the commission that Chase be invited

to one of the upcoming meetings to become more informed about the idea.

Mehaffy thought it was good idea and excitedly bounced ideas of preparing a slide show or just other visual aids giving examples of what the commission has in mind, possibly even bringing with her other OTEC board members opening up the possibility of the project happening on a more wide scale than originally thought.

Mehaffy thought showing them what the commission wants to do may get them give a conception approval.

As discussed at a previous meeting Commission members were asked to bring art samples that could be used in the project that lead to time spend critiquing the art samples in relation to the project.

Mehaffy said that the actual boxes needed to be selected so Oregon Sign Company could make a bid proposal and the project could move forward.

At the last meeting the Commission spoke about the possibility of a “freak alley” behind Thatcher’s Ace Hardware along the Parkway.

Mehaffy offered to speak to them regarding the possibility.

She advised the Commission, “I have an announcement. Conceptually yes, they are very interested and want a proposal from us. They want to see something in writing before they agree.”

Mehaffy suggested at the next meeting they spend some time talking about it.

EOU president visits Baker



Sunny Werner / The Baker County Press

EOU president sips wine with Alyssa Peterson of Peterson’s Gallery on Main Street.

• PETERSONS GALLERY HOSTS EVENT

BY SUNNY WERNER
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On Monday, October 12th a contingent of Eastern Oregon University administration and staff came to Baker City.

First on their agenda was to meet with the leadership at Baker Technical Institute.

BTI’s Mission Statement states:

“It is our mission to provide opportunities for students to achieve their personal best, become responsible and productive citizens, and embrace lifelong learning in a safe and positive environment. We believe all children can learn and excel with developmentally appropriate materials, practices, and strategies.”

Because of the remarkable success BTI has had over the past year educating students who desire a different path than college, EOU was interested in meeting with staff to discuss ways that the university might be of assistance.

Presently, the Technical Institute offers training and education in the following career pathways:

Agriculture, Building Construction, Culinary Arts, Engineering and Health Services. Aquaponics and Welding are also on offer.

Future programmes will include Information Technology and Mechanics.

Tim Seydel, Vice President, University Advancement Executive Director, EOU Foundation, commended Baker for being “an advanced community” in regard to developing and supporting Baker Technical Institute.

Seydel went on to say that many communities face the same issues with high school graduates who may not be college bound but still need education in a career. “Baker is providing a resource for those students,” he said.

Rick Paradis, Director of Development, explained, “Practical education is so important, so that those students have the skills leading to a career.” Paradis said that the primary reason for the visit to Baker was to “encourage, support and discuss the courses, and how to make the transitions easier for the students.”

He went on to point out that “students might complete the studies in Construction, for example, and then realize they would like to own their own company. They could transfer to EOU and get a degree in Business.”

Following the tour of BTI, the EOU officers and staff went to Peterson’s Gallery for a President’s Reception.

Hosting the reception were Davey and Alyssa Peterson. Davey is a graduate of Eastern Oregon University with a degree in PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics). Alyssa said they support EOU and were happy to host the event.

EOU President Tom Insko circulated during the reception in his honour, visiting with local community residents.

Insko mentioned his appreciation of the Petersons hosting the event and congratulated them on the success of their enterprise.

“We always enjoy seeing what our graduates have achieved,” he said, “and we are happy to receive their suggestions for inclusion in future courses.”

Insko also commended Baker for the community support Baker Technical Institute receives.

The delicacies on offer were catered by Zephyr, a nearby store to the Gallery.

U.S. 395 to be closed for culvert repair

The Oregon Department of Transportation will be replacing two culverts under U.S. 395 (John Day-Burns Hwy.) in November. The Sheep Gulch Culvert near mile post 6.1-C and the Vance Creek Culvert near mile post 11-C are insufficient to handle water and debris flows anticipated due to erosion issues left after the Canyon Creek Complex Fire that burned through the area in August and September. The U.S. Forest Services is estimat-

ing a 100 to 650 percent increase in water and debris flow along several creeks that drain off the mountainside into Canyon Creek and other local tributaries. The project will replace the culverts with new structures that are designed to accommodate the anticipated flows. These culverts need to be replaced immediately.

To facilitate the project U.S. 395 will be closed between mile post 2.5-C and 17-C for about 10

days beginning November 4th, followed by several days of single lane travel controlled by pilot cars and flaggers while crews continue the work. ODOT will work with local fire/emergency service providers, private property owners and others needing access between the two work sites to help accommodate critical needs as much as possible during the closure.

ODOT will be sharing information about the need for this project and the

temporary highway closure at the Wednesday (Oct. 14) Grant County Commission meeting in John Day, sometime between 9 and 11 a.m. Information will also be shared at the Harney County Commission meeting in Burns on Oct. 21, sometime between 10 a.m. and noon. Both meetings are open to the public.

Information will also be posted on the ODOT Region 5 website at www.tinyurl.com/odot-region5.

OSP doesn’t know what killed wolves

The Oregon State Police has suspended its investigation into the deaths of two wolves found in Wallowa County the week of August 24th.

The wolves were necrop-

sied, however due to decay the cause of death has not been determined.

The Oregon State Police does not know if the wolf deaths were human caused.

The two wolves were

found dead in the Sled Springs area.

One of the wolves found dead was collared (OR21, female). After the collar emitted a mortality signal, law enforcement respond-

ed and found two deceased wolves within 50 yards of each other. The collared wolf and a male she was with were known as the Sled Springs pair and were newly established.

Trail designation comments sought

An open house is set Oct. 26 to seek comment on designating the South Shore Phillips Lake Trail as a State Designated Scenic Trail. The open house will from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Baker County Library, 2400 Resort Street.

Oregon Scenic Trails are non-motorized trails that provide access to significant national, state or regional scenery and showcase Oregon’s natural gems. Scenic trails are longer than one mile, open to the public, substantially complete and lie on public lands.

The South Shore Phillips Lake Trail winds along the south shoreline of Phillips Lake. At 6.6 miles, the non-motorized trail is a mostly flat, family-friendly route to be enjoyed in all seasons. Comments on this proposed trail designation can be submitted online at http://www.oregon.gov/.../Trail_.../Pages/PhillipsLakeTrail.aspx. Comments will be accepted through Nov. 13, 2015.