

# Local

## Commissioners meet with BLM officials about coordination

• **TIMBER SALVAGE CONTINUES TO BE ISSUE, DARK CANYON AREA ATTRACTS BIDS FOR 238-ACRE ALLOTMENT**

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On Thursday, October 29, Baker County Commission Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioner Tim Kerns, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin were joined by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Vale District Manager Don Gonzalez and BLM Baker Field Manager Lori Wood, for another informational session in a continuing series of government-to-government coordination meetings.

Harvey opened the meeting by introducing the guests, and explaining that Commissioner Mark Bennett was absent because he had other scheduled meetings to attend.

Harvey said the meeting would be an informational one, and, as such, public testimony would not be taken at that time, but rather, reserved for the next Commission session, on Wednesday, November 4.

He said that decisions would not be made at the informational meeting, but in the future, with the public involved in the coordination process.

“Coordination is a process, as I’ve explained earlier, government-to-government relationship, and it gives us equal footing to develop the plans that we’re looking for, out in the field, and the issues that we deal with, because, primarily, Baker County is responsible for taking care of the management of the land, where it involves taxation,” Harvey said.

The agenda, copies of which were provided for those present, included the following major topics: roadside salvage time table; area salvage; road work; rehabilitation; NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act); and consistency between local and federal plans, policies, and tactics.

“The differences, if you know some, between your (the BLM’s) abilities and the Forest Service—they have more, what I call roadblocks, but, you guys

have more opportunities, it seems like, to get things done faster, which we wholeheartedly appreciate,” Harvey said, first pointing out issues with revenue and lack of personnel available to the county’s Road Department.

Wood explained that the BLM’s regulations are different than those for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), regarding roadside salvage, and that there is no Categorical Exclusion (CE) specifically for that.

“What we have done is, every time we do a salvage, we focus in those areas, and work our way out, based on the values, and things along those lines,” Wood said, as she explained that the BLM tackles the issue in a different way, and she has no data available concerning the total mileage of roads.

“We have the ability to do 250 acres, CatEx (Categorical Exclusion, including half a mile of temporary road, to remove the salvage)...Our larger ones have to go through a larger NEPA process,” she said.

A 238-acre zone in the Dark Canyon area produced the first salvageable timber for sale, attracting several bidders and resulting in a sale with prices above the appraised value, last Tuesday, she said.

Prompted by Harvey, Wood said the sale was by weight, and not a result of the longer, less efficient process of marking trees. Wood noted that the sale hadn’t been awarded at the time of the meeting, because the group Oregon Wild protested the salvage last Monday.

Wood said the next upcoming CatEx will be in the Grizzly Bear fire area, in Wallowa County, which was expected to have been approved this week, and scheduled for sale possibly mid-November, also by weight.

Upon completion of the two sales, she said that the next zone would be a larger one, of different sections in the Windy Ridge-Cornett fire area, possibly 1,500 acres, based on available data.

“In regards to that, do you have some roads up there that you consider closed, but, they’re still roads?” Harvey asked

Wood, in response to her explanation about determining road access via meetings with the USFS and private land owners.

Wood said, “Not so much, with the BLM. Most of ours are existing routes, then, they are a part of our available network, at this point in time.”

Pointing out BLM funding issues, Harvey said, “Our great concern is, we always send whatever revenue you get off of sales or something, to the black hole in Washington, and it never comes back. We’re greatly concerned that you have not had the funds available to you, to continue the management, and the restoration, and everything that we need to do, as far as Baker County sees it...”

At one point, Harvey discussed his concerns with the conditions on Dooley Mountain, saying that, while he understands a portion of the trees needs to remain, for wildlife, etc., much of the timber needs to be removed.

A mention by Wood of possibly a large number of mushroom hunters in the spring utilizing roads and trails prompted Harvey to repeat his concerns, as this activity (or another type) could involve being in the vicinity of timber which has the potential to be dangerous.

Kerns said, “I am curious about the 1,500-acre thing. To clarify, you’ve got to go through a full EIS (Environmental Impact Statement), I guess, to do the 1,500 acres, or, can you do that without it?” Wood responded that it would require going through the NEPA process, to determine whether it would require an EIS or an EA (Environmental Assessment), and a CE would not be applicable, since it’s over 250 acres.

“This (timber salvage and other projects) is huge for Baker County, so, we will defend it, against any and all, because that’s our right to do so, and our responsibility, which is more important,” Harvey said, speaking about the issues with protests from environmental groups regarding the salvage, and the necessity to remove dead and dangerous timber in the interest of public and agency staff safety, as well as to provide a sustainable level of employment for future generations.

He also voiced his frustration with the amount of regulations preventing the BLM from accomplishing its goals, an issue he said is amplified even more so

with the USFS.

Harvey asked about road work to be completed, including culvert installation/replacement, and Wood said that there are proposed projects, but, a need to wait on approval of funds.

Gonzalez said, “The tough part for us is, because the cost for fixing things is so high with this fire, it exceeds the State Director’s authority. It has to go to the Washington office, and, that’s where things get slowed down, going from one office to another, and, we’re now waiting. Then, they look at this compared to other fires that are being submitted to them. That’s the delay.”

Reassuring Harvey regarding his concerns about keeping roads open, and referring to the Windy Ridge-Cornett fire, Wood said, “As far as the Baker resource area, we do not have any proposed closed roads out there, nor are we looking at closing any, as a result of this incident.”

On the topic of rehabilitation, Wood mentioned that the BLM has proposals in place in different areas for aerial, drill and hand seeding, pending approval, and that seedlings are expected to be planted especially in the Windy Ridge-Cornet area. Harvey said that there’s a lack of available seedlings, but, there is an opportunity to lower the number of seedlings needed, which would lower costs and aid in meeting tree spacing goals beforehand.

Harvey expressed issues in general with NEPA, stating that bias is shown with consideration toward the environmental component more than the human component, and he asked if the understanding is there with the BLM that it is supposed to be a balanced process.

Wood replied that both are taken into consideration, but, since the analysis involves wildlife and habitat, a great number of comments comes from those with environmental concerns, which need to be addressed. The result is that it may often appear imbalanced, she said.

Discussing the County’s Natural Resource Plan (NRP), and federal plans, Harvey said, “That’s what we’re striving for—consistency, so, that we look at things as a holistic approach, and long term.”

## Crossroads may expand

Crossroads Carnegie Art Center would like to invite the public to give input via three scheduled community outreach sessions looking at a long term strategic visioning plan for a potential expansion of Crossroads.

Crossroads has received grant funding from the National Endowment for the Arts Challenge America Grant and the Ford Family Foundation to do a feasibility study on the neighboring Welch Building as a possibility for any future expansion.

“Crossroads is extremely proud of the work that was done to renovate the Carnegie Library Building into our home. Crossroads has no plans to leave the Carnegie Library! Yet, the Carnegie Library is limited in teaching space which is a core of our mission and Crossroads has been looking at options. The Welch Building is one of those options. Crossroads Board of Directors is committed to a careful and systematic process which has always included a great deal of community input,” said Executive Director Ginger Savage.

The public meetings are being held on three different days and times to engage as many community members as possible and the goal is for no session to go over 90 minutes.

Meetings will be lead by Larry Abell, AIA of Baker City and architect completing the feasibility study.

Session 1: Tuesday November 10th at 1:00 p.m.

Session 2: Tuesday November 17th at 8:00 a.m.

Session 3: Thursday November 19th at 6:00 p.m.

Refreshments will be provided at each session in the downstairs studio at Crossroads at 2020 Auburn Ave.

“We so appreciate the property owner’s cooperation and patience as we have worked through finding the funds for the study. We all agree that this will be a long-term process, much like the Carnegie Library Restoration, which took six years to complete. Crossroads does not own the property but is looking at it as a logical nearby location,” stated Executive Director Ginger Savage. “Clearly arts, culture, heritage and humanities are growing as an economic driver in our community and as oldest continuously operating art center east of the Cascades we need to be nimble and prepared for future growth.”

Crossroads also invites community members to stay after the public input session and share with staff and the architect any stories or remembrances of Welch Building or to some it was known as the old Baker Clinic or the old KBKR Building.

The feasibility study must be done by December 31, 2015 and at that time the Crossroads Board of Director will take the time to review all options. If you have any questions please contact Crossroads at 541-523-5369.

## Interchange meeting ahead

On Tuesday, November 10, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. the Baker City Council and the Baker County Board of Commissioners will hold a public hearing to consider an Interchange Area Management Plan for Interstate 84 exits 302 and 306 and review the recommendation for adoption of the plan made by the Baker City and Baker County Planning Commissions. Adoption of the Interchange Area Management Plan would include:

- Adoption of the Interchange Area Management Plan for exits 302 and 306 as addendums to the Baker City Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the Baker County Comprehensive Land Use Plan
- An amendment to the Baker City Comprehensive Plan to include the Interchange Area Management Plan implementing policies in the Transportation section of the Plan
- An amendment to the Baker County Comprehensive Plan to include the Interchange Area Management Plan implementing policies as an addendum to the Plan
- Adoption of the Interchange Area Management Plan maps into the Baker City Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the Baker County Comprehensive Land Use Plan
- Creation of an Interchange Management Overlay Zone in the Baker City Development Code and the Baker County Zoning Ordinance that contains requirements for development review, including interagency coordination, access management, and impact study requirements

The proposed changes are to ensure the interstate exits continue to operate properly if growth occurs in the areas. This will be accomplished by providing review standards in the Comprehensive Land Use Plans and Zoning Ordinances for future development within the Interchange Management Areas.

The Plan also includes alternatives for routing traffic if proposed development is projected to cause congestion.

The joint public hearing will be held in the Council Chambers of Baker City Hall, 1655 1st Street, Baker City, Oregon.

A copy of the proposed amendments and the applicable criteria are available for inspection at the Baker County Courthouse, 1995 Third Street, Baker City, or on the project website: <http://sites.kittelson.com/BakerCityI-AMPs>.

All interested persons are invited to attend this meeting.

Those wishing to comment may do so by presenting oral testimony at the hearing, or by submitting written testimony. All written testimony must be submitted to the Planning Department by 5:00 p.m. on the hearing date or submitted in person during the hearing.

If you have questions, please contact Holly Kerns at the Baker City-County Planning Department at (541) 523-8219 or [hkerns@bakercounty.org](mailto:hkerns@bakercounty.org).

## County Commissioners

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Additional revenue of \$3,450 from Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Speed Grant increased the amount available for vehicle repair and maintenance expenditures, from \$15,000 to \$18,450.

Resolution No. 2015-2017, Appropriation Transfer Within The 2015-2016 Budget Within The Non-Departmental And The Sheriff Departments Of The County General Fund, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey.

This transfer includes funds in the amount of

\$20,117, from Contingency, to Sheriff Cars, amending the new totals to \$674,765 for Contingency, and \$60,117 for Sheriff Cars. Ash was present to give a brief explanation for the purpose of the transfer.

Oregon Military Department Office Of Emergency Management Emergency Management Performance Grant No. 15-501, was ratified (Bennett had signed the document on October 15, 2015), with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey. This grant includes matching funds to Baker County, in the amount of \$65,000, for a total budget

of \$130,000.

Harvey said that, though there will be no further Commission sessions scheduled for this month (due to out of area commitments), there will be a coordination meeting with ODF, on Tuesday, November 24, at 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers, and possibly, later that day, with the USFS.

He also mentioned that First Friday with the Commissioner will be held Friday, November 6, at 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers.

The monthly Eastern Oregon Mining Association (EOMA) meeting will be

held on Friday, November 6, at 6 p.m., at City Hall.

A joint Baker City-Baker County meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 10, at 6 p.m., at City Hall, to receive testimony on Ordinance No. 2015-07, An Ordinance Adopting An Interchange Management Plan For I-84 Exits 302 And 306 By Amending The Comprehensive Land Use Plan And Zoning Ordinance.

A Baker County Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC) meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 17, at 3 p.m., in the Commission Chambers.