

Local

Public Arts Commission needs new City Council representative



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Members of the Public Arts Commission met this Tuesday.

• NEW MASTER PLAN DISCUSSED

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
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Tuesday evening the Public Arts Commission met in a two-hour meeting for their regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

After unanimously voting to accept minutes from the last meeting upon a motion by Ann Mahaffey and a second by Corrine Vegter, the Commission spoke briefly about the need for City Council to appoint a new Council representative to the Commission since the resignation of Mack Augenfeld.

Mike Kee, City Manager and staff representative for the committee advised he would approach City Councilors regarding the vacancy.

The Commission next discussed the Leo Adler Memorial Parkway extension project. The project has been completed and each Commissioner said they were satisfied with the final outcome.

Kee did have some news for the Commission about their budget. He said, “I do have some information about the budget, The LAMP project went over budget so Michelle (Owen, Public Works Director) had to use the money from your budget.”

All of the Commissioners seemed to understand but asked, “What’s left?”

Kee answered, “All of it had to be used.”

Corinne Vegter said, “Well, we will get more in January.”

Kee and Mehaffy both shook their heads no with Mehaffy saying, “No. not until July.”

The Commission seemed to accept what was, with no argument.

Mary Miller did make note that in personally assessing the completion of the LAMP extension, she noticed signs that have been posted by the Baker Elks Lodge stating that the area adjacent to the LAMP, Wade Williams, was ‘Not a Public Park’ and gave information that if someone wished to use the area who could be contacted.

The commission expressed concern that occasionally those using the parkway and tubing launch area used the picnic tables in the “park” to have picnic lunches before launching into the river.

The commission asked Kee if those users could potentially be charged with trespassing.

Kee advised that they indeed could, and he would check into it a bit more.

The Commission then moved on to talk about the vinyl wrap project.

Some obstacles need to be overcome to complete this project.

Both ODOT and OTEC have expressed interest in the project but OTEC engineers have stated that they feel the idea is not a good one for their utility boxes due to overheating concerns.

Mehaffy said further research needed to be done to present to both ODOT and OTEC addressing the concerns they have and said she thought contacting Cities that had similar projects could be contacted to gain information regarding their experience.

Mehaffy told the committee she had found a product manufactured by 3M that was exactly what they would need however, she had not researched the cost.

The committee questioned whether Oregon Sign Company might be able to provide a similar product at a similar cost citing the desire if possible to use a local company.

Mehaffy advised she had been in contact with Oregon Sign Company about the project and they needed to do some further research to find out what materials specifically are needed but they had expressed to Mehaffy a willingness to do the project.

The commission also suggested contacting Oregon Sign Company to see if they could provide a sample product that could be introduced at future ODOT and OTEC meetings that could give a tangible idea of what is being proposed since the door was still open on the possibility of the project happening.

The Committee is not

giving up on the idea, continuing to push forward toward completion and is committed to addressing concerns that could be prohibitive.

One of the major tasks needing addressed is that the Commission needs to develop a master plan.

They have all brought to the table master plans from around the state and the country that they feel have elements that encompass our community’s lifestyle and values.

The Commission has been reviewing the plans and deciding what parts of each one they like best.

The group used a flip chart to identify things they felt were important in developing their own plan, with members agreeing to each take certain portions and work on defining them.

Once each section is completed and the commission agrees on them eventually a master plan will come together. The list that the commission came up with is as follows.

Introduction. Identifying what is public art, what are the principles and why it is important. Also encompassing the city’s history in public art. Mike Kee agreed to work on the introduction portion with Mary Miller and Derek Hosler working together on the History component.

Vision. Identifying how art enhances lives, defining acquisition and maintenance of art in our community and addressing resources, spaces and locations for art. Brian Vegter chose to work on this aspect of the plan.

Objectives and Aspirations. This component encompasses the impact and engagement of community public art, community collaborations and education. Ann Mehaffy said she would tackle these.

Goals and Priorities. All the commissioners agreed to provide input for this extremely valuable component which consists of identifying, obtaining and retaining resources and training opportunities, location and place making for the Arts, addressing policies and processes, which they all agreed was an extremely important factor.

Funding was also considered to be of vital importance to the successfulness of the Committee and its mission.

Outreach. This component is important in involving our community. Mary Miller said she would work on this

At the meeting, local artist Don Herman addressed the committee regarding a project he is working on creating a sculpture that would be interactive, encouraging the community to be hands-on with the exhibit.

The Committee discussed at length where the best location to place such a sculpture would be, Court Plaza, Central Park or a downtown street corner.

The commission finally agreed to scout out locations on their own and they would discuss them at the next meeting yet all were in agreement that wherever the location it needed to be very noticeable and accessible in the downtown core area of the city.

They also spoke at length about the financial aspect of the sculpture. Herman assured the committee he was not interested in selling them the sculpture, only providing it to the community for their enjoyment.

Corrine Vegter compared this idea as being similar to the idea she had introduced about exhibits being loaned or displayed in rotating exhibits.

Some would be for sale, others simply loaned to the City for a period of time. Compensation for his work was a hot topic among the commission in which Herman was adamant he was not looking to make money and should that be the case he would be interested in finding a way to provide art to children that struggled to afford such opportunities.

The Commission was in agreement that the opportunity Herman was providing was an exciting venture that needed further discussion.

The Committee scheduled their next meeting for January 12, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall before adjourning.

Sheriff warns of IRS scam

The Baker County Sheriff’s Office would like to warn residents about a fraud/money scheme that is surfacing in the area.

There have been multiple reports of citizens being contacted by phone and told the IRS has an arrest warrant for delinquent taxes.

The suspect provides a phone number and encourages citizens to call to find out more information about the warrant.

The callers may sound very convincing or attempt to scare citizens into acting and sending them money. This is definitely a scam and Sheriff Travis Ash asks that if you receive a phone call regarding an arrest warrant from the IRS please do not provide the caller with any personal or banking information.

More charges filed against Witter

On November 30, 2015, Robert Lee Witter (dob 4-10-1935) of 205 E. Adams Street, Huntington, Oregon was arraigned on an Amended District Attorney’s Information. The new District Attorney’s Information alleged nine additional charges including the three original charges that Witter was previously arraigned on.

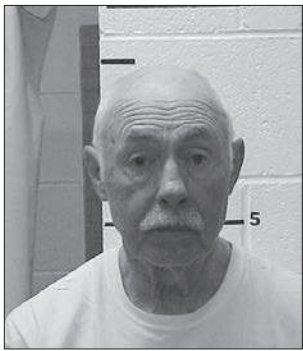


Photo Courtesy of the Baker County Sheriff’s Office
Robert Lee Witter.

The new charges include two counts of Rape in the First Degree, two counts of Unlawful Sexual Penetration in the First Degree, two additional counts of Sexual Abuse in the First Degree, one count of Using a Child in Display of Sexually Explicit Conduct, one count of Encouraging Child Sexual Abuse in the Second Degree and Felon in Possession of a Firearm.

The three original charges included Sexual Abuse in the First Degree, Private Indecency and Luring. Those original charges allege Ritter had sexual contact with a 13-year-old child and that he showed the child pornography as part of the crime, which led to the Luring charge. He was also charged with Private Indecency for exposing himself the child.

Those charges are alleged to have occurred between September 1, 2015 and November 14, 2015.

The new charges stem from Witter allegedly taping a child victim who was under the age of 12 while sexually assaulting the child.

Two of the new charges, including Rape in the First Degree and Unlawful Sexual Penetration in the First Degree, allege that the child was physically helpless at the time of the sexual assault.

Ritter is also charged with one count of Sexual Abuse in the First Degree involving the child under the age of 12 and one additional count of Sexual Abuse in the First Degree for causing the child to contact the sex organs of a dog.

The new charges involving the child under the age of 12 are alleged to have occurred in August of 2014. Circuit Court Judge Greg Baxter denied release or bail to Witter following a November 30, 2015 hearing and Witter is being held in the Baker County Jail pending trial.

The investigation by the Baker County Sheriff’s Office is continuing and the case will be presented to a grand jury next week.

Economic development

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“The Baker County Economic Development Council unanimously opposes the proposed ballot initiative to raise the Oregon minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour. Raising the minimum wage would negatively impact the most vital sectors of Baker County’s economy.

“We believe the following effects of passing such a proposal should be taken into consideration before citizens in Baker County, and throughout Oregon cast their votes.

“Raising the minimum wage would raise costs for fixed income seniors; Raising the minimum wage will impose negative impacts on farming, ranching, other agricultural sectors; Oregon voters already inclined 5 to 1 that minimum wage increases hurt small business; Oregon economists estimate increasing Oregon’s minimum wage will cause a reduction of 52,000 jobs statewide.”

Smith mentioned that Dan and Linda Shelton, owners of the new business Dan’s Dawg House, have made excellent business decisions so far, avoiding the pitfalls that sometimes plague new businesses in the area. Dan’s Dawg House was profiled by Meghan Andersch in the Friday, November 20, 2015 issue of The Baker County Press.

Smith said he’s heard no decision yet from representatives for Albertsons, as to the future of the former Albertsons location, where the failed Hagen store currently sits, or whether the Safeway store will remain where it is.

Smith said that an end-of-year report regarding Baker County Economic Development’s accomplishments is expected to be completed and displayed possibly at the Chamber of Commerce.

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