

Local

County Commissioners hear Justice Court updates, questions over new wildfire video

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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held its second regular session of the month on Wednesday, March 16, 2016, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse.

Present from the Board were Commission Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioners Mark Bennett and Tim Kerns, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin.

The meeting was called to order, and the optional Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were recited, both led by Harvey.

The agenda was adopted, and the minutes from the Wednesday, March 2, 2016 regular session were approved.

Citizen Participation included Art Sappington, who spoke about mining documents, and Joelleen Linstrom, who spoke about the Baker County vs. David McCarty, aka Columbia Basin Helicopter, case.

Baker County Trial Court Administrator Michael Finney provided the Board with a Justice Court update, with details about 2015-2016 in review, and 2016-2017, and beyond, including:

The Justice Court is currently hearing a few misdemeanors, and contempt of court cases; the District Attorney (Matt Shirtcliff) is still handling failure-to-appear (FTAs), and Probation Violations; FTAs are now being heard in Justice Court, instead of Circuit Court; the bulk of Justice Court's complaint filings are from the Oregon State Police (OSP); and the increase in the speed limit doesn't seem to have any effect regarding speeders, because, with an increase in the speed limit, according to Finney, people will still go 10-30 miles per hour (MPH) over the speed limit.

Finney's information shows that revenue is

down \$27,765.10 in the current fiscal year, from last year, however, the budget should be on target; the City is up \$153.54 from last year, and the State is down \$17,431.43 from last year; Small Claims fees were raised to \$35 this last year, and the amount of Small Claims filings are down.

There's been a fairly consistent stabilization in employment among all law enforcement agencies, according to Finney, and only the City Police Department is down one officer, though he's heard that the department had hired a replacement. Justice Court staffing includes a part-time Justice of the Peace, one full-time Trial Court Administrator, one full-time Court Clerk, and one part-time Court Clerk, according to Finney.

According to Finney, for now, current legislation hasn't affected Justice Court, however, there could be major effects from the next legislative session, and the State will see a significant budget deficit with not only PERS (Public Employees Retirement System), but with the Courts, as well.

Lorrie Harvey presented a privately funded and privately produced, three-minute video, titled "Fire On The Mountain," which includes interview clips from Commissioner Harvey, local rancher and Commissioner Mark Bennett, and local area ranchers Kody Justus, and Dennis Kiely, regarding the issues with mismanagement of public lands, and the devastation of wildfires.

Brenda Holly, and Dave Hunsacker voiced some objections to the video (the subjects in the video were interviewed as private individuals), including the Harveys' and Bennett's involvement in it. The video is available for viewing at bakercountywildfire.org.

Ash provided the Board with a Sheriff's Depart-

ment purchase request, for two vehicles: a 2016 3/4 ton Dodge pickup, from Powder River Motors, which will replace a 2009 Dodge 3/4 ton pickup; and a 2016 Dodge Special Service pickup, from Powder River Motors, which will replace a 2010 Ford F150.

According to the request, Powder River had the lowest bid for both pickups, for a total of \$55,152 for both. Ash stated that \$40,000 is currently budgeted for vehicle replacement, and that the 2010 Ford F150 will be sold to the (County) Facilities Division, for \$6,000, and the Facilities Division will trade a 1998 Ford F150 to Powder River Motors for \$1,000, both reducing the price of the 2016 Dodge Special Service pickup. He proposes to also use the equipment line of \$10,000, in order to purchase both vehicles. The purchase request was approved.

An Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) liquor license application, from applicant Amy E. Lord, for Hells Canyon Inn, LLC, located at 53945 Highway 85, Halfway, was reviewed by the Board. The purpose of the application is for a change in ownership and trade name, as the business was licensed by the OLCC, to Lynne Thompson, of the former Thompson's Hells Canyon Inn. The application was approved.

Order No. 2016-123, amending Order No. 2016-112, Referral Of Weed Control Local Option Tax For Four Fiscal Years: 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020 To The Baker County Weed Control District Electorate, was approved. The language in Order No. 2016-112 was amended to read the following, with changes noted in parenthesis: "The estimated tax cost for this measure is an ESTIMATE ONLY based on the best information available from the County

Assessor at the time of estimate (and may reflect the impact of early payment discounts, compression and the collection rate)."

Order No. 2016-124, amending Order No. 2016-113, Referral Of Vector Control Local Option Tax For Four Fiscal Years: 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020 To The Baker County Vector Control District Electorate, was approved. The language in Order No. 2016-113 was amended to read the following, with changes noted in parenthesis: "The estimated tax cost for this measure is an ESTIMATE ONLY based on the best information available from the County Assessor at the time of estimate (and may reflect the impact of early payment discounts, compression, and the collection rate)."

Order No. 2016-125 An Order Directing The Baker County Sheriff To Make Sale Of County Property; Fixing The Minimum Price And Providing A Portion Of The Conditions And Terms Of Sale, was approved, with a minimum bid of \$15,000. According to the order, the foreclosed property located at 251 Granite Street, Sumpter, is valued at \$48,310 (\$32,170 for the land, \$16,140 for the structure), and back taxes are owed to the County in the amount of \$6,065.19, plus an estimated \$1,200 in expenses. The sale is expected to take place on Tuesday, May 10, 2016, 10 a.m., on the steps of the Baker County Courthouse.

Order No. 2016-126, Re-Appointing Members To The Transient Lodging Tax Committee (TLTC), was approved. Kathy Reedy was re-appointed, her term set to expire on August 1, 2018.

The next, regular Commission session is scheduled for Wednesday, April 6, 2016, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse.

FAFA gives contact names

The open-roads advocacy group, Forest Access for All (FAFA) gave official notice of their two official points of contact for FAFA in matters of scheduling FAFA representation at official county/forest service meetings, and when asking for any official public statement pertaining to FAFA's position on matters regarding public lands issues on which one may be wishing input.

FAFA's two official points of contact will be President Tork Ballard, 541.523.4209 and Public Relations Officer John Creighton, 541.523. 1160.

Ballard and Creighton have the full support of the FAFA membership and Executive Board and have been given full permission to speak on behalf of the club.

Top Gun instructor comes to EOU

One of the original instructors for the United States Navy Fighter Weapons School known as Top Gun will be a guest speaker at the Blue Mountain Conference Center April 7.

Captain Milburn "Mel" Holmes shares his insight on the Vietnam War, the need for the instructor program and its subsequent success for the presentation from 7-8:30 p.m.

Admission is \$18 for adults, and \$15 for veterans and students. Hors d'oeuvres and beverages will be served. All proceeds benefit Grande Ronde Academy, a private, interdenominational Christian school for students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Holmes grew up in Union County and graduated with La Grande High School's class of 1957. He went on to earn a degree in general studies from Eastern Oregon College (EOU) in 1961. He entered the Navy's aviation training school and later became a Navy carrier fighter pilot, serving during Vietnam.

"Eastern gave me the necessary tools that enabled me to compete with flight students from larger and more prestigious universities during the course of becoming a Naval carrier pilot," Holmes said.

Over the course of three deployments, Holmes accumulated 264 combat missions and was one of nine pilots chosen to reinvent the process of teaching pilots the art of air-to-air dog fighting and how to fly and fight in a combat environment. He served as head of the air-to-air combat department at Top Gun until 1970.

After leaving the Navy, Holmes flew for Northwest Airlines and retired as a Boeing 747 captain. He founded three aviation companies, Marianas Airlines, Grey Eagle Aviation and Grey Eagle Flight Academy. In 2006 he was named EOU's Distinguished Alumnus and honored during Homecoming.

Holmes is a regular guest speaker for various organizations and addresses Top Gun's graduating class on occasion. He became a supporter of the Grande Ronde Academy after a tour of its facility last summer.

"I saw that the school could benefit from financial assistance to provide additional materials to improve the environment for their young students," Holmes said. "As a native son, I want to do my part to help generate fundraising interest for the academy. I also think that parents should have an option to place their children in schools that may have different values than what the public system is able to provide."

Tickets may be purchased in advance at Grande Ronde Academy, 507 B Palmer Avenue. Tax-deductible donation receipts are available. For more information call 541-975-1147.

Interpretive Center offers activities

The National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center is offering special activities for families during Spring Break—March 21 through 24.

One-hour workshops will be offered that detail what happens to plants and animals in the spring. These workshops are held at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. daily. Cost is five dollars per session to cover cost of materials.

Daily Workshop Themes
Monday, March 21: Nesting & Migration
Tuesday, March 22: Pollination and Interconnections
Wednesday, March 23: Hibernation & Spring Growth
Thursday, March 24: Life Cycles & Habitats
Workshops are suitable for ages six and up, but activities for younger children are available as well.

Free hands-on pioneer craft demonstrations will be available at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. each day. Children's films, Junior Explorer Activities and the interactive children's exhibit "Wagons Ho! Experience the Oregon Trail" are also open daily.

Space is limited, so pre-registration is encouraged. For more information or to register, call (541) 523-1852 or email ots1844@gmail.com.

For fourth graders, ask about the "Every Kid in a Park" pass. This pass allows fourth graders, and their families, free entrance to federal park sites throughout the US.

The National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, operated by the Bureau of Land Management, is located east of Baker City, Oregon. Take Exit 302 from Interstate-84 onto Oregon Highway 86 and proceed five miles. The Center is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Admission for adults is \$5; seniors are \$3.50; and children 15 and under are free. Federal passes are accepted.

Clarification

In last week's coverage of the First Friday with the Commissioner at the County, we reported on a discussion that the Bulls & Broncs event "may" move to Haines next year. To clarify, whether this was a possibility was asked by a member of the public, which led to the discussion. Chamber Director Shelly Cutler said in follow-up this week that the event is in fact *not* being moved, and wished to clarify that.

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