

Local

Mining Summit sees elected officials, miners turn out

BY TODD ARRIOLA
Todd@TheBakerCountyPress.com

The second annual Eastern Oregon Mining & Aggregate Development Summit was held on Tuesday, April 26, 2016, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the Baker County Event Center, 2600 East Street, with over 100 people attending. The event was sponsored by the Oregon Mining Association (OMA), Oregon Concrete & Aggregate Producers Association (OCAPA), Oregonians In Action, Baker County Economic Development, and Eastern Oregon Mining Association (EOMA).

Baker County Commission Chair Bill Harvey, and EOMA President Ken Alexander delivered welcoming statements, both introduced by OCAPA attorney Rick Angstrom. Baker County Economic Development Director Greg Smith provided the closing statement.

Attendance included EOMA Mineral Policy Director Jan Alexander, Smith's assistants, Julie Hicks, and Phillip Scheuers, Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett, Baker City Manager Mike Kee, EOMA Executive Director Chuck Chase, Blue Mountain Small Business Development Center (BMCC SBDC) Advisor Jeff Nelson, EOMA Secretary Carmelita Holland, Baker County Assessor Records & Research Specialist Terry Drever Gee, Jefferson Mining District Coordinating Officer Art Sappington, Alice Knapp, Ken Anderson, and Ed Hardt.

Angstrom, also the emcee, kicked off the event with an introduction, at 10

a.m. He called Harvey and Ken Alexander up to the stage, while he spoke about the variety of guests presenting, and attending. He mentioned the social hour, held at 4 p.m., which was an effort to allow people in the community a chance to mingle with representatives of the different agencies, to talk about issues, and concerns.

Harvey said, "Hey, this is great. This is a lot bigger than last year. We really appreciate you all coming down here to Baker...Most of you already understand, the history of Baker was started with mining. That's a huge asset for us, still today. We're recognizing that even more so each week ... It shows the resources we have in Baker County (referencing a display, set up by Smith) ... DOGAMI has helped us to do that. It gives people an understanding of what's in Baker County...Before we didn't know, we didn't understand ... What they (miners) do, brings an economy to Baker County, and we need that ... There are new mining opportunities, that weren't available, years and years ago...You guys do a great job nowadays; it wasn't done 100 years ago. When you're done mining, we can't tell you've even been there... Reclamation is one of the biggest assets we have, that you guys utilize, and it makes Baker County look good. We really appreciate that ..."

Ken said, "Bill covered, pretty much, all the positives, of how modern mining is so much different than 100 years ago, or even 50 years ago. We have not done a very good job in the mining industry, of letting the general pub-

lic know that our mining methods, now, are so much improved, and we have the bonds, and reclamation. A lot of times, we're going back in old workings, and making them better than they ever were. So, that's basically the message I'm trying to get across. And the other thing the Eastern Oregon Mining Association does, besides promote mining, and the minding industry, is to try to get reasonable rules, and regulations, that we can work under...What I'm going to ask for help with, is that project...We (EOMA) have members from all over the State...I would welcome you to join our organization, and please, learn a lot about mining here..." Ken mentioned EOMA membership applications, available at the event.

Four groups of panelists presented information; two before lunch, and two afterwards.

Panel One, "Why Mining Is Important To Eastern Oregon's Economy," included Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) Director Brad Avy, Oregon Regional Solutions Eastern Oregon Coordinator Scott Fairley, Business Oregon Business Development Officer Melisa Drugge, Oregon State Economist Mark McMullen, and Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Eastern Regional Solutions Team member Randy Jones.

Panel Two, "Legislative Update," included Oregon State Representative Cliff Bentz, OMA attorney Dave Hunnicutt, Oregon State Senator Ted Ferrioli, and Angstrom.

Bentz said, "I just want to say how much I appreciate the participation of the



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Ken Alexander of Unity speaks to the crowd while the Baker County display is visible in the background.

local miners, in the legislative process...I've learned that folks here are willing to come over to Salem, and help (testify)...All of us are fortunate to have Senator Ferrioli supporting us in Salem...Mr. Hunnicutt, and Mr. Angstrom have been incredibly helpful, in moving (mining) bills through the House, and the Senate (such as recent House Bill 3089, declaring mining as a natural resource)...The point is, raising the consciousness of Oregonians, about the value of mining, is the most important thing, at least, from my standpoint... Over and over, I find the environmentalists target mining, and practices that occurred 100 years ago, as though they're occurring today, and of course, they are not ..."

Ferrioli said, "In the short legislative session (in 2015, which he dubbed the 'Smash and Grab Session'), we saw some of the most major policy issues that I've encountered in decades...The minimum wage mandate...It seems to be the institutionalized form of discrimination, depending on where you live in Oregon...Out tax

policies, and our minimum wage policies make a huge difference...We're apparently not (friendly to businesses) ... Mining is not recreational. It is a significant sector of the Oregon economy that needs the support, and if there was any reasonableness in our political system in Oregon, it would be thriving...We have tremendous assets that need to be developed, and part of our oldrum in rural Oregon, is because we don't use the resources God put here, for the community...People have the right to be sustainable, on the resources that are in their community ..."

An hour long lunch was held after the second panel of guests, including sandwiches, pasta salad, beverages, and dessert.

Panel Three, "Legal Updates," included Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Geologist Steve Flock, Hunnicutt, BLM Geologist Tim Barnes, and Angstrom.

Panel Four, "Mining On Federal Land," included United States Forest Service (USFS) Biologist Jeff Jones, Flock, and Baker County Planning Director Holly Kerns.

In closing, Smith thanked Angstrom, and said, "By Oregon's Constitution, they expect their legislators to have real jobs; to go to Salem for five, six months, but come home, and earn a living... I'm pleased to be a part of Baker County, and to do the work here in the County, trying to build this economy. It's a challenge, but a challenge worth undertaking...These guys are good—they're really good (after prompting Angstrom, and Hunnicutt to stand). Every day, they're fighting for your interests, down in Salem...I want to share just a few thoughts with you. Baker County Economic Development is here to assist your company, your industry, in growing, and trying to get off the ground...I know what the process is. I know how challenging it can be...They (State and Federal agencies) have a pressure on the other side, and that's folks who don't want mining. That's a reality...That's part of the challenge..."

Smith praised Harvey for his efforts, and brought Hicks up to the stage, where he presented her with a card, and a gift, for her efforts.

AAUW forum shows even starker differences between Commissioner candidates

BY KERRY McQUISTEN
Kerry@TheBakerCountyPress.com

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) hosted a candidates forum, which drew a crowd of maybe 100 to hear Kody Justus, Jeff Nelson and Bruce Nichols field questions. The three are squaring off for the chance to fill the part-time position one County Commissioners seat being vacated by Tim Kerns.

Sheriff Travis Ash will campaign against John Hoopes, but that race will not turn up on the ballot till fall. Ash spoke briefly, as did County Clerk Cindy Carpenter and County Assessor Kerry Savage.

The candidates were given some questions ahead of time, and delivered previously prepared statements before the floor was opened for questioning.

Early on in the introductory statements, key differences in political ideology showed, with Nelson and

Justus typically in agreement and Nichols taking a converse stance.

Nichols stated emphatically that "unlike the other two candidates" he would not use tax dollars to sue the federal government if that's what it took to ensure that the County was recognized equally with federal agencies through coordination.

Nelson and Justus previously stated that they would do what it took, including filing suit on behalf of the County to protect local control.

Nelson and Justus also support the transfer of public lands to state or county management, taking that duty away from the Feds.

Nichols stated, "Locally we don't have enough resources to manage lands."

He advocated to "make friends" with agencies rather than take a firm stance. His statements drew nods of approval from some self-proclaimed liberals in the crowd, and groans from the more conservative side of the room.

Nichols also stated that the Republican party he belongs to would not support the opposite point of view, drawing questions from many Republican Precinct Committee People in the room who had copies of the party's platform, which reads the opposite.

Numerous questions in the room were addressed only to Justus who therefore spent more time in front of the microphone than the other candidates.

Tom Averett asked if Justus supported an armed takeover of a local federal building. Somewhat perplexed, Justus said of course he would not.

Mary Miller asked Justus if he would support Bill Harvey in hiring Fred Kelly Grant's law firm to represent the County in the coordination process. Justus answered that indeed he would support getting expert legal advice.

Spring Bartlett asked Justus why he hadn't mentioned his Oath Keepers membership at a past forum. Oath Keepers has

recently been misreported in other media as a "militia." Justus explained that he had forgotten to mention that membership as well as many others when he answered a question previously.

Other questions involved vaccinations, mental health issues within the county, improving the value of timber, how to attract other industry into the area and a tough question from Perry Stokes asking each candidate what the greatest risk would be for voters should he be elected. Nichols said he'd tell the truth even if it hurt. Nelson said he wouldn't be the most intelligent person in the room but he knew when to get expert advice. Justus said the only risk would be if he ignored the Constitution, thereby failing to protect the rights of the minority.

The crowd then dispersed into an informal meet and greet.

Oregon's primary election will be held May 17, with results released after polls close at 8 a.m.



Kerry McQuisten/
The Baker County Press

Travis Ash.



Kerry McQuisten/
The Baker County Press

Kody Justus.



Kerry McQuisten/
The Baker County Press

Jeff Nelson.



Kerry McQuisten/
The Baker County Press

Bruce Nichols.

Ballots have already been mailed to Oregon residents. Those who do not receive their ballot by May 5 should visit the Baker County Clerk's office for

assistance. The deadline for registering or changing party affiliation in time for this election has passed.