

Local

Planning Commission approves Idaho Power permit

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The Baker County Planning Commission held a public hearing on Thursday, April 28, 2016, 6 p.m., in the matter of Conditional Use Permit CU-16-004, for the development of three duplexes, and a recreational vehicle storage area, in the Hells Canyon area, from applicant Idaho Power Company.

Present from the Commission were Chair Alice Trindle, and members Jim Grove, Randy Joseph, Thomas Van Diepen, and Kasey Wright.

Present Baker County Planning Department staff included Planning Director Holly Kerns, Planners Kara Harris and Carson Quam, and Planning Assistant Kevin Berryman.

Attendance also included representatives for the applicant, Idaho Power Company Real Estate Portfolio Manager Laura Bishop, and Project Manager/Engineer Tim Ferguson.

Trindle called the meeting to order, followed by roll call, with the noted absence of Commission Vice Chair Lauri Hoopes, Commission member Suzan Ellis Jones, and Senior Planner Eva Ceder.

The minutes from the Thursday, March 24, 2016 meeting were reviewed, and approved, with a motion from Van Diepen, and a second from Wright.

Trindle opened the hearing, followed by recitation of the standard hearing statement. She asked if there were any challenges to the jurisdiction of the Commission to hear the matter; if there were

any conflicts of interest, or personal biases to be declared by a Commission member; and if there have been any ex-parte contacts, regarding the matter, to be declared by a Commission member, and each answer was singly answered in the negative.

Harris presented the staff report for CU-16-004, using the County's Smart Board interactive display, to aid in the explanation. Idaho Power Company, Inc. (the applicant) has requested approval for a Planned Unit Development (PUD), which includes three duplex units (six residential dwellings), intended to be used for employee housing, and a 28-unit capacity recreational vehicle (RV) storage area, on property owned by the applicant, located in the Eagle Island Loop area, in Hells Canyon, eight miles south of Copperfield Park. The proposal is in support of ongoing hydro-power operations (Idaho Power currently operates the Brownlee, Oxbow, and Hells Canyon Dams).

The properties are identified as Tax Lots 200 and 300, in Township 8 South, Range 48 East, W.M. (Willamette Meridian), Baker County, OR (References 14772, 12373, 900584, and 900799). Tax Lot 200, parcel 1, around 29 acres (Reference 14772), is zoned RR-5 (Rural Residential), and Tax Lot 300, parcel 2, around 125 acres (Reference 12373, 900584, and 900799), is split-zoned RR-5, and EFU (Exclusive Farm Use). The PUD will be located on Tax Lot 200, and the RV storage area will be located on Tax Lot

300.

Joseph interjected with a question about whether the applicant could sub-divide, and sell some of parcel 2 at some point in the future, which he said is a conflict with the idea of a PUD (The PUD is proposed for parcel 1). Parcel 2 includes four, double-wide manufactured homes, each with an outbuilding; one, single family residential home, with a detached garage, and an outbuilding; and, two manufactured homes, with accessory storage buildings. Harris responded that the applicant would need to reapply for anything like that, and be heard again by the Commission, and she also stated later during her presentation, that Idaho Power intends to remain the sole property owner.

Trindle asked whether the RV storage area would be for employee storage use, and Harris responded that it would be, and that there is no intended commercial use, or intention to use it for residential stay.

Trindle called upon the applicant to testify, and Bishop spoke solo first, with the Commission. She said that Harris had covered the subject very well so far, and Bishop elaborated on the proposed residences, facilitating employee travel from and to Boise, and the landscaping, speaking about the concept of the Wildland Urban Interface, which is where developed areas intermingle with undeveloped areas, and it includes actions taken to prevent damage, or loss from wildfire. She said that Idaho Power is interested in reducing fuel



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L-R: Tim Ferguson, Laura Bishop, Randy Joseph, Jim Grove, Alice Trindle, Tom Van Diepen and Kasey Wright.

loads for potential wildfires, and in maintaining the scenic quality.

Joseph asked how the term "landscape" was defined, and Bishop responded that it would include preserving the natural state, including maintaining (or replacing) native grasses, and not installing any additional potential fuels, such as shrubs, for wildfire.

The discussion continued, including Ferguson, during which, Bishop mentioned that Idaho Power is celebrating its 100-year anniversary this year, and she emphasized the importance of the hydro-power operational efforts.

After speaking about other details, Trindle closed the hearing, and the Commission members began a discussion regarding the proposal. Joseph voiced concerns about the lack of deed restrictions mentioned in the conditions of approval, and he said the zoning ordinance requires them, whether they're included or not, and this topic caused some confusion, and significant further discussion, first between Joseph, and Grove, who went over details of future expansion potential, what percentage of area exactly is developed, and what is undeveloped, open

space, etc.

Kerns read statements by Idaho Power, that the applicant acknowledges that the Planning Commission could require open space, and Joseph said that, according to the zoning ordinance, it's required, there's no choice, and the amount of that space should already be specified, and be part of the deed restrictions, rather than the applicant reapplying later, to address this issue. Joseph said he was confused, because the applicant stated there would be no issue with the deed restrictions, including minimum open space standards, and he didn't understand why the Commission may not even include those requirements, since they would be easily met.

The Commission and Kerns discussed including these details in the conditions of approval, and Trindle reopened the hearing, in order to speak with Bishop and Ferguson. Trindle asked for more clarity, and Bishop elaborated, and stated she has no issue with the deed restrictions.

Trindle once again closed the hearing, and Kerns suggested some language, to be added to the Conditions of Approval. She read the suggested

addition, which included meeting open space requirements. CU-16-004 was approved, noting the addition as Conditions of Approval #12, with a motion from Grove, and a second from Van Diepen.

Trindle read a hearing process statement, and then, Kerns provided the Commission with a Director's Report.

During the report, Grove asked whether the Commission will conclude efforts regarding Goal #5 issues soon, voicing his frustration, along with Joseph (Goal #5 is one of the Statewide Planning Goals & Guidelines, "To protect natural resources, and conserve scenic, and historic areas, and open spaces").

Trindle said she wants to get something completed, and something to the Commission, and Joseph said that he didn't get that impression, during the last discussion on the topic. Grove said he's willing to discuss it at one more work session, Joseph said that there needs to be improved criteria, and Trindle said she intends to discuss it at the next work session, scheduled for Monday, May 9, 2016, 5 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 26, 2016, 6 p.m.

OTEC places first for NWPPA safety award

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative placed 1st in the 2016 Northwest Public Power Administration (NWPPA) Safety Awards competition held at the Engineering and Operations Conference in Spokane, Wash., on April 14, 2016.

"It is a great honor to be recognized," said Jeff Anderson, OTEC's Manager of Safety and Loss Control. "This award acknowledges that OTEC's safety record is well above average and that is attributed to the culture of care we have for one another and a healthy respect we have for the incredible power of electricity. We are committed to safety. It is constantly at the forefront of all of our operations - whether our crews are working out in the field on top of a power pole or processing documents in the district offices."

Utilities from across the Pacific Northwest, Alaska and California compete in this annual safety contest. NWPPA safety contest awards are based upon a review of each utility's number of recordable injury/illness cases (the incident rate) and the lost work days (the severity rate).

In 2015, between the

150,001-500,000 hour category, OTEC had no lost time accidents. This paired with the lack of injury cases is what put OTEC in the lead for the recognition.

"Electricity is great stuff - but, it is easy to forget how dangerous it can be," said OTEC's Board President George

Galloway. "Our employees are not only consistently dealing with high-voltage electricity, they are operating heavy equipment and often working high in the air, around the clock, in less than favorable weather conditions. This past summer, they also found themselves dealing with wildfires of historic

proportion. This award acknowledges our continued perseverance and commitment to safety."

Galloway added, "OTEC's safety record is the result of having

extraordinary employees who make safety a priority. The icing on the cake is that our strong safety record substantially reduces insurance premiums, helps us control our rates to our

members and allow us to remain in good standing with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. All good things."

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The Baker County Democratic Central Committee enthusiastically endorses renewal of the local option levy for the Baker County Library District! We are proud to recognize our outstanding, pro-active library system! It is a valuable asset for our community.

The Baker County Republican Central Committee has voted to endorse the Friends for Baker County Library Levy PAC. This is a renewal of the existing levy which will not change for the next 5 years. Keep our library open for all ages to use and enjoy. Please vote to approve this measure. Thank You for your support.

"Living more than 70 miles from Baker City, the bookmobile has been a life changer. As a homeschooling family, it has been especially helpful. The librarians have always gone far out of their way to fill topic and special requests and bring us loads of options. My children from the time they were babies have been able to experience having a library that has come to them. We get to walk there!" Jodie Davis, Oxbow

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New Levy will NOT raise the tax you now pay for your library.

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