

Local / Opinion

County Commissioners

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Attendance also included Baker County Assessor Kerry Savage, Baker County Justice Trial Court Administrator Michael Finney, Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash, Baker County Facilities Maintenance Foreman Dan McQuisten, Lisa Wilson and Alan Mendenhall of the Sunridge Inn, Baker County Transient Lodging Tax Committee (TLTC) members Lea Gettle, and Karlynn Dolby, Baker City Library Budget Board President Gary Dielman, Baker Heritage Museum Board Vice Chair Dave Hunsaker, Life Flight La Grande Base Manager Peter Benjamin, Jefferson Mining District Coordinating Officer Art Sappington, Ed Hardt, Ken Anderson, Eastern Oregon Mining Association (EOMA) Executive Director Chuck Chase, Bobbie Danser, John and Ramona Creighton, Tork and Wanda Ballard, and Vickie Valenzuela.

The session was called to order, followed by the optional Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance, both led by Harvey.

With no changes or additions noted, the agenda was adopted, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns.

Citizen Participation included comments from Sappington who provided an update regarding the Jefferson Mining District, and legal criteria which he had presented, as handouts, during the 2016 Mining Summit in Baker City last month. He said the District is working with attorney Fred Kelly Grant, to resolve coordination issues, with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

The minutes from the April 27, 2016, May 4, 2016, and May 11, 2016 sessions were approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns.

Lindsey provided an update regarding the Dispatch Center's Stencil recorder, which had failed completely on Monday evening of last week. She said that there are various changes and updates being implemented at the Center, and that the recorder was successfully installed last Friday (installation crews were there at 9 a.m.). Lindsey said that updates to the recorder are being implemented, to also streamline City Fire Department access to the system.

She said that in regard to records, the Center is behind on reports, because of technical equipment issues. The Center has spent \$482 for employee membership to APCO (Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials), and so far, \$1,400 has been granted for membership scholar-

ships, Lindsey said.

Among other items, she said that the Center is short two reserve dispatch personnel, and there's been trouble covering shifts, resulting in a lack of meeting state and national standards (90% of the calls being answered in 10 seconds or less, for example). She said the average is a 15-second response, which falls short of the standard. Center staff are working to address the issue, whether it's problems with equipment, and/or personnel.

Holly initiated a discussion regarding the American Stewards for Liberty, an organization the Board had approved of seeking assistance from at a previous Commission session, in order to gather information, to draft a County response to the BLM's proposed revisions to its planning regulations (the initiative is known as "Planning 2.0"), which would adversely affect government-to-government relations, between the BLM, and the County.

"Private individuals stepped, and paid the \$1,000 for membership (the funds were, in fact, privately raised and donated), I believe, to the American Stewards of Liberty. Mr. Harvey, can you explain this process, whether it's finalized?" Holly said.

Harvey responded that it is, and Holly asked how private individuals could do that, in the name of Baker County. Holly voiced an issue with "special interest groups" who "funneled money through Baker County," and Harvey said that it's not special interest groups, but individuals who donated the funds.

She asked if it's a matter of public record, which individuals had donated, and Harvey said "No, ma'am." She responded that it's an interest to members of the County, when certain individuals make donations for the County's use, as the rest of the citizenry of the County may not be aware of the process. She wondered whether the American Stewards for Liberty listed donors on its website, and Harvey said he didn't know. She repeated that that information should be a matter of public record.

Harvey said, "It (the funds) didn't even come to the County. Other groups, on their own, initiated the effort to donate money to that purpose (Planning 2.0)." Holly asked if it was donated in the name of Baker County, and Danser said, "In support of Baker County."

Valenzuela spoke next, and said, "I also have great concern about an organization that is not disclosed, private individuals not disclosed, and funneling money into Baker County, to an organization that you guys have no control over...I talked to Mark

(Bennett), and he said that he is not in favor of having an organization that you can not be on the Board of..." She said there was not adequate notification of the public about the effort with the organization, that the Board had involved "special organizations," and that it's totally inappropriate. Harvey said he didn't involve anybody, the Commissioners chose not to use County funds, and the funds, and effort were volunteered from donors.

Valenzuela said, "What is the overall purpose of this organization?" She cited an example, the Oath Keepers, calling them "anti-government militia."

Oath Keepers, in fact, are not a militia.

Harvey said he wished to not disseminate misinformation, and they debated about the source for that information.

She voiced her concern about the "...perception that Baker County is somehow attached to this organization (American Stewards for Liberty)."

Harvey responded that the County is not considered "attached" to the organization. She said she wishes to see the County not proceed on a "slippery slope," and that the County proceed slowly, in order to attain its intended goal.

Harvey interjected with a statement from the Honorable Jim French, of Humboldt County, Nevada, regarding the need to seek assistance from outside organizations, when necessary (such as American Stewards of Liberty). Harvey clarified Bennett's position, stating that Bennett didn't support the use of County funds to seek that assistance, but he does support the idea of using American Stewards of Liberty. Harvey said that a response from the County to the BLM's proposals is due by May 25.

Valenzuela asked Bennett for his position, and he said that he doesn't have an issue with private funds being utilized, for the purpose of seeking assistance from the American Stewards of Liberty (or other organizations), and he repeated that he doesn't support the use of County funds for this, and that he understood that the County is not actually a "member" of the organization.

He cited some examples of experiences with the BLM, that the relationship is positive (he mentioned specifically the efforts of BLM Vale District Manager Don Gonzalez), and that Planning 2.0 has the potential to change that relationship, in a negative way. "My thought is that, as long as we weren't using County money... we ought to take look at it (the effort and information from the organizations)."

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— GUEST OPINION —

Giving law enforcement tools they need to help victims in an emergency

By Rep. Greg Walden

On December 1, 2013, Kari Rene Hunt was brutally murdered by her estranged husband in the bathroom of a motel room in Marshall, Texas.

Her three children listened through the door as she was stabbed repeatedly. Kari screamed to her nine year old daughter to "call 9-1-1."

The girl did as instructed, frantically dialing 9-1-1 four times. But each time, she heard static on the other end of the line.

What she didn't know is that, because of the way the motel's phone system was set up, she had to dial "9" first to reach an outside line. She told her grandfather later, "I tried, but it wouldn't work, Papa."

On June 2, 2007—just days after her high school graduation—Kelsey Smith went to a Target store in Kansas to buy a present for her boyfriend. She was abducted from the parking lot in broad daylight, and law enforcement began a massive search for her.

They were unsuccessful for four days until her cell phone's location information was turned over to law enforcement. Kelsey's body was then found in about 45 minutes.

The House Communications and Technology panel, which I chair, heard these stories recently from the parents of both the slain young women.

No family should have to face situations like these. And they were made worse by a confusing patchwork of laws that govern telephone and communications systems in this country.

If the laws were different at the time, is it possible that Kari Hunt and Kelsey Smith would be alive today? Perhaps. That's why I'm helping to lead an effort in the U.S. Congress to pass two bills to ensure that law enforcement can help victims faster in an emergency situation, when time is precious.

One proposal, known as "Kari's Law," would require that all multi-line telephone systems, typically found in hotels, offices, and schools, be configured to reach 9-1-1 without any additional prefix. After all, children are taught from a very young age to



Submitted Photo

Greg Walden represents Oregon's Second Congressional District, which covers 20 counties in southern, central, and eastern Oregon.

simply dial 9-1-1 in an emergency, not "9-9-1-1" or "7-9-1-1" or anything else. This fix would be both easy and inexpensive.

Many hotels around the country have made progress addressing this problem, but we need a uniform, national standard to make sure what happened to Kari Hunt and her family never happens again.

It's been said that you may only dial 9-1-1 once in your life, but that time will be the most important call you ever make.

We should make sure it's as easy as possible so you can get the help you need when seconds count.

Another proposal, known as the "Kelsey Smith Act," would give law enforcement the tools to locate victims in emergencies, using location data from their cell phone providers.

By creating a narrow set of circumstances in which law enforcement can access this type of data, the bill seeks to protect the privacy of users while still allowing access for law enforcement when the situation demands it.

The Kelsey Smith Act is already the law in 22 states, including right here in Oregon where it was approved by the legislature unanimously in 2014. The federal bill would take the Oregon standard and apply it nationwide. It's just common sense.

Both these proposals were recently approved unanimously by the Communications and Technology panel I chair, as well as the full Energy and Commerce Committee.

The next step is a vote in the full U.S. House of Representatives, which I hope will take action soon.

These plans would save lives using existing technology and don't cost taxpayers a dime.

It's time they become law so that what happened to the families of Kari Hunt and Kelsey Smith never happens to another American family again.

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