

Local

County Commissioners

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Dielman said, “My concern is that Baker is essentially hiring a lobbyist, with some private money. We don’t know where it comes from. We don’t know what favors it’s going to buy with the Commissioners...We need to know who those people are, who came up with \$1,000, so the County can hire a lobbyist ... I want to know, what’s the precedent for Baker County, hiring a lobbyist?” Harvey responded that the Eastern Oregon Association of Counties (EOAC) has hired lobbyists on behalf of Baker County, and that the American Stewards of Liberty is not a lobbyist.

“Sure it is,” Dielman responded. “You’re hiring the American Stewards of Liberty to lobby Congress, to not change things you don’t want changed...” Harvey said that’s not what’s happening. He said, “We’re just gaining information, so that we can finish writing our comments, that we are required to do, to have standing, in an objection...”

Dielman said, “But, you don’t have to pay \$1,000, to do that. You have the power, and freedom...to get your foot in the door, so that you can be part of the process, in any further discussion with the BLM, about these changes ... We need to know who is buying your cooperation, to then go to the Stewards of Liberty, a fairly radical organization, to speak on your behalf.” Chase laughed in response to this, and Harvey repeated what he said about solely gathering information, for the purpose of finishing the County’s response to the BLM’s proposals.

Dielman repeated what he’d said about not having to pay the American Stewards of Liberty \$1,000, from unknown, private donors, who are “buying” unknown influence. Harvey said, “Sir, they’re not buying any influence.” Dielman said, “Well, that’s what you say, but, I do not believe you, because you’re accepting this free money...Today, I hope you change your minds.” Harvey said, “No, sir, we already spent the money.”

Sappington voiced support for the County, stating his opinions from a legal point of view, pointing out issues with the BLM’s proposals. He said that the County needs standing, and that there is a responsibility to protect its citizens.

Hunsaker voiced opposition to the assistance sought from the American Stewards of Liberty by the County. “We’re not here to stop a juggernaut of oppression, by the federal



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

Vickie Valenzuela expresses her belief that the County is associating itself with unsavory groups.

government ...” He voiced the desire to see the County be more “transparent” with its process, and to “... be really careful where you get your input from...I’m not very happy about this, either.”

Chase commended the Board for its efforts. “The (Planning) 2.0 is one of the most dangerous things I’ve ever seen...The County is the only thing we’ve got, and the only thing we’ve got to defend what we have in the County, is coordination. We were so impressed with the Stewards of Liberty, and what they’ve accomplished...”

Ramona and Danser responded with support for the County’s position.

A Request For Qualified Proposal (RFP), for outside legal services for Baker County Commission, and County Departments, was approved to be sent to licensed, area attorneys, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns. The due date for proposals is June 1, 2016, and late proposals will not be accepted, according to the document.

Order No. 2016-131, An Order Designating A Sole Source Provider For Hot Mix Asphalt And 3/4-Gravel For Baker County Road Department, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns. High Desert Aggregate & Paving, Inc. was designated, as it is the only provider of hot mix asphalt within the area, for the Federal Lands Access Program project on Granite Hill Highway, according to the order, and as such, it is exempt from competitive bidding requirements contained in ORS (Oregon Revised Statutes) 279B.075. Fiscal years 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 are periods covered, per the order.

Order No. 2016-132, An Order Designating ‘H&H

Lock And Key’ As A Sole Source Provider, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns. According to the order, the provider has previous and specialized knowledge of Baker County key/lock functions, and security; the provider is the only qualified firm operating within Baker County; and the provider is a local business, located at 2440 Broadway, providing 24 hour emergency service. Fiscal years 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 are periods covered, per the order.

An Intergovernmental Services Agreement (IGA) Contract No. 3517-16, between the Oregon Department of Revenue, and Baker County, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns. The agreement is for map maintenance, and related cartographic services to be performed by the Department of Revenue for Baker County, according to the document, for fiscal year July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. Estimated staff hours are 194, at a maximum rate of \$60 per staff hour, for a total cost of \$11,640, according to the agreement.

A letter, dated May 10, 2016, and addressed to Oregon State E-Permitting Program Manager Celina Patterson, from the County, stating that the County wishes to either opt out of the new Accela Manufactured Home Ownership Document System, and the associated IGA, if the deadline for opting in or out is not extended, or, to opt in, if the deadline is extended, was ratified, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns. The County stated legal, and operational concerns with the program.

An agreement, between Baker County, and the Baker County Employees Association, an affiliate of

SEIU (Service Employees International Union) Local 503, OPEU (Oregon Public Employees Union), for a 2% wage increase for 2016-2017, was approved to be executed, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns.

The private sale of County foreclosure property, located at 1905 14th Street, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey (Kerns abstained). According to the staff report, the property was foreclosed on in 2007, and the back taxes owed total \$15,088.12. The current tenants are willing to purchase the property for the back taxes owed, and sign a release to waive interest on the unpaid taxes, and the tenants will pay all closing costs, title insurance, and title company costs.

The Board discussed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), formed on October 14, 2014, between the Sunridge Inn, and the County, regarding the discharge of Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) penalty payments. Harvey explained that the options before the Board (this topic was discussed during several Commission sessions) were to forgive the debt owed by Sunridge Inn, \$16,362.67, or to collect that amount. After further discussion, Bennett made a motion to have the penalty amount set aside, and to have the Sunridge Inn continue with monthly TLT payments (as per the MOU).

Order No. 2016-133, Re-Appointing A Member To The Baker County Parks And Recreation Board, was approved, with a motion from Harvey, and a second from Bennett. Steve McLean was re-appointed, his term set to expire on March 1, 2019.

Compensation Board approves 2% raises



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

Werner Buehler and Mitch Southwick of the Baker County Compensation Board attended last week’s meeting.

BY TODD ARRIOLA
Todd@TheBakerCountyPress.com

The Baker County Compensation Board met for its annual meeting on Thursday, May 12, 2016, 2 p.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, in order to consider a 2% pay increase for elected officials.

Present from the Board were Mitch Southwick, and Werner Buehler. Board member Jim Grove was absent.

Also attending were Baker County Board of Commissioners Chair Bill Harvey, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin.

The minutes from the May 20, 2015 Compensation Board meeting were approved, with a motion from Buehler, and a second from Southwick.

The sole, brief public testimony, or comment from an elected official was that from Harvey, who said that the documents under review looked fine (no public, or other elected official presence was noted).

Martin began review of the meeting notes, stating first that revenues are rising slowly, taxes will be up 2.5%, state revenues will be up slightly, fees are about the same, and transfers to special funds have increased.

She said that the County is currently in negotiations with the BCLEA (Baker County Law Enforcement Association) for a law enforcement wages contract (it expired on June 30, 2014), and for the law enforcement employees to pay 10% of the health insurance premium cost (the County would pay 90%), with a 10% cap. Health insurance costs are estimated to increase by about 8% for law enforcement, and PERS (Public Employees Retirement System) costs are expected to increase by possibly 20%. Buehler responded that the increase in PERS costs is a huge concern, making determining the budget difficult, and that the State should provide some kind of range of what the increase would actually be.

Buehler asked Harvey if the County budget could absorb that increase, and he said that he wasn’t certain yet. Buehler asked Martin if it would be possible to calculate what the impact of the PERS increase would be to the County budget, and she said that she would speak to County Administrative Services Director Christena Cook, as Cook had most likely already determined that. Southwick commented that salaries are a major part of the budget. Martin said that roll-up costs (costs in addition to salaries, including PERS, health insurance, etc.) could be between 30 and 35%.

Continuing with the review, Martin said that SEIU (Service Employees International Union) Local 503 wages will be up by 2%, per contract (a recently negotiated wage opener contract), and an estimated health insurance cost increase of 8.7% is expected. She said that non-represented personnel and department head wages will be up by 2%, and health insurance costs will also increase by 8.7%.

There is an expected increase in wages for elected officials, she said, of 2%, and health insurance costs are expected to increase by 8.7%. The following information was provided, regarding current (2015-2016) wages for Baker County elected officials (all are full-time positions, except where noted): Sheriff, \$74,256; Assessor, \$66,720; Clerk, \$66,720; Treasurer, \$66,720; Surveyor, contracted; Justice of the Peace (half-time), \$33,360; Commission Chair, \$74,568; Commissioner (half-time), \$32,724; and Commissioner (quarter-time), \$16,368.

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Durkee: Drunk driver sets off fire near Plano Road

On May 12, 2016, Baker County Deputies, Oregon State Police and Baker Rural Fire responded to a report of a vehicle fire off of Plano Road near Interstate 84 Milepost 331.

When Deputies and Rural Fire arrived the vehicle was fully engulfed. The vehicle had been traveling on Interstate 84 Westbound when it had left the roadway crashing, starting the vehicle and a small grass fire.

An Oregon State Police Trooper and a Baker County Deputy located a subject walking on Interstate 84 Westbound near the vehicle crash. The subject was later identified as Gerardo G. Mejia-Zuniga of Buna, WA, the operator of the vehicle and the lone occupant.

Mr. Mejia-Zuniga was subsequently arrested by the Oregon State Police for Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants, Failure to Perform

the Duties of a Driver involved in a Motor Vehicle Accident involving property damage, No Operator’s License and Failure to drive within lane of travel. Mr. Mejia-Zuniga was transported and lodged in the Baker County Jail.

The vehicle involved was a 2004 Chevy Impala registered in the State of Washington, and was a total loss.

Explosion

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However, the explosion was severe enough to cause at least some structural damage as well—visibly knocking the roof apart from a wall.

After quite a bit of debate between responders as to how and where to transport Amans, a landing site for Life Flight was identified in the parking lot of the Burnt River School. No update on his condition was available in time for print.