

# Local

## County: Windfarm, sewer issues in Richland discussed

• SPECIAL SESSION HELD LAST WEEK

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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held a special session on Wednesday, June 23, 2016, 9 a.m., in order to approve a Letter of Credit for Willow Springs Windfarm, LLC, and three Resolutions regarding transfers of County funds, two to address major sewer issues in Hewitt Park, in Richland.

Present from the Board were Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioners Mark Bennett and Tim Kerns, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin. Other attendance included Baker County Planning Director Holly Kerns, Baker County Administrative Services Director Christena Cook, and Willow Springs Windfarm Project Manager Ryan Markham.

The session was called to order, and the optional Invocation, and the Pledge of Allegiance were recited, both led by Harvey. The agenda was adopted, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns, with the noted additions of Resolutions 2016-1032, 2016-1033, and 2016-1034, to be included as Documents to be Signed.

No comments were provided for Citizen Participation, as there was no attendance noted, other than the aforementioned individuals.

Holly spoke with the Board about the Letter of Credit, included in the list of conditions attached to a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), approved by the Baker County Planning Commission, for the windfarm, in 2014.

The condition states, "The applicant is required to comply with the Decommissioning Plan as submitted and shall provide a bond or irrevocable letter of credit, of sufficient value to cover expenses of removal of the project, which is deemed acceptable by the Baker County Board of Commissioners."

In the event the project, located near Huntington, which consists of four to six wind turbine generators, were to be abandoned, the Letter of Credit, in the amount of \$267,400, issued by KeyBank, would be used as the County's fi-



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

Ryan Markham, Windfarm project manager with Holly Kerns in the background.

ancial assurance, to cover removal expenses.

Holly had spoken with Cook, and with staff of the Oregon Department of Energy, to discuss any potential issues. While the windfarm's projected life span is 20 to 30 years, her research indicates that a Letter of Credit is generally not available for that length of time (they're usually issued for a one-year period, she said), however, per her request, an amended Letter of Credit has been issued for a 10-year period, after which, another acceptable Letter of Credit could be reissued.

Markham said that Willow Springs Windfarm has a 20-year agreement with Idaho Power, and as such, the operational goal is at least 20 years, with an investment not solely in the windfarm, but also in the City, and the County, as well.

The Letter of Credit was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns.

Cook began discussions with the Board regarding the Resolutions, explaining each one prior to its approval. The first two Resolutions, No. 2016-1032, Appropriation Transfer Within The Non-Departmental Department Of The County General Fund, and No. 2016-1033, Appropriation Of Unanticipated Funds To Be Expended In The Non-Departmental Department Of The Parks Fund, in the amount of

\$30,000, is for the purpose of addressing major sewer issues in Hewitt Park.

Cook said Baker County Parks and Recreation Director Karen Spencer, who was addressing issues at the park and could not attend the session, and others were attempting to keep the pumps which lead to the drain field operational, an effort which has involved numerous contractors, including Idaho Power personnel, she said.

Cook said the issues were thought to be resolved several times, however, they had continued, and the pumps were rewired, and malfunctioned again the night before the session, necessitating Spencer's presence at the park. Harvey said that pump motors were replaced, and the tanks pumped, among other issues addressed, every effort was being made to remedy the situation as soon as possible, and the transfer of funds is to cover associated bills with the work.

Though the transfer still leaves \$318,017 in the Contingency fund, Bennett expressed concern over the transfer, which leaves less overall in the County's General fund, shortly before the beginning of the next fiscal year. He suggested, while noting that the transfer and expenditure is certainly appropriate, it would be a good idea to limit other General fund expenditures early during the next fiscal

year, in order to compensate for having to address the sewer issue.

Cook said, while she thinks the cost of addressing the issue so far, \$30,000, doesn't appear to be a major drain to the budget, she can emphasize to the different County department staff that requests from the departments for purchases for equipment, etc. could be made later in the next fiscal year.

Resolution No. 2016-1032, and Resolution No. 2016-1033 were approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns.

Cook discussed with the Board Resolution No. 2016-1034, Appropriation Transfer Within The Non-Departmental Department Of The County Health Fund, in the amount of \$15,000, from EHR (Electronic Health Records) Software, to Public Health Administration Fee, giving Public Health Admin a new balance of \$30,000, while EHR Software remains now at \$39,698. Cook said this was a routine transfer, and Public Health Admin needed some additional funds. The resolution was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns.

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

## Two Safeways

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

"Then, about two weeks, to two and a half weeks ago, I received a phone call from Albertsons, and they shared with me that, 'We're getting ready for our ribbon cutting, could you tell me who to contact at the Chamber (of Commerce), who do I talk to at City Council, who do I talk to with the County,' and I went through, and gave them names and suggestions, on how to get a big bang for the buck, to show that they're going to be a good neighbor.

"Then, about a week later, I get a phone call again from them, and they say—and this time, they left me a message, I didn't talk to them personally— 'We just received word that we're not going to open up an Albertsons, but rather, we're going to have two Safeway stores, and we're going to try and operate both of them.' I left them a message back, saying, 'You know, I'm extremely concerned by this decision. I think folks in Baker County are going to scratch their heads, and speculate...' And, I said, 'You probably need to spend a little time talking to our local press.' I mentioned your paper, along with the two others. 'You may want to have a conversation with them, and explain how two Safeway stores are going to operate successfully, in the community.' And, I left that message with them. Since then, I haven't heard a thing back."

Smith said that the decision to operate two Safeways would leave himself, and others in the County, to speculate about the future of the company, and that, should Albertsons decide to only have a single Safeway, then, he hopes the company would "...do the right thing, and open up a secondary location...I'm extremely concerned with their decision, and, I hope, when it's all said and done, they choose to be a good neighbor, and that means, either operate both stores—you know, I'm highly skeptical of—or, if they choose to operate only one store, I hope they choose to close out their lease, on whichever space they're going to vacate, and allow the owner of that building to actively recruit another business in there.

"I still have two other grocery stores that have expressed strong interest, but, until the dust settles, and, until they know what the market place is going to look like, and what buildings are available, they're not going to proceed forward, and, rightfully so. I understand why they wouldn't," he said.

Smith said there is a bit of detail he thinks the FTC was missing, when it released the statement that if there was no one else who will buy a supermarket, it's better to have Albertsons own it, than to have it closed, regarding Albertsons' purchase of its former location, after Haggen declared bankruptcy.

Smith said, "There are a lot of small, mom-and-pop franchises, folks who own small grocery stores, independently. Let me give you an example: Red Apple. Red Apple, they go, and they buy the franchise, but, it's just a mom and pop, who usually own those grocery stores. Red Apple would be a perfect fit for Baker City. You know, they're a small-town, community-oriented grocery store, and it would provide an alternative to a national chain, such as Safeway, or Albertsons. It's the same with IGA—a lot of those are independently owned, mom-and-pop, and I seriously doubt the FTC went out, and reached out to every small, mom-and-pop, when they made that statement."

At the time of the announcement that there would be both an Albertsons and a Safeway store, Smith thought everything would be as before, when the two stores were in operation. Now that the plan has changed, he said he needs to see how everything plays out. "I've got to find out what was the true intention of Albertsons..." he said.

Smith said that Economic Development has attempted numerous times to market the 10th Street business area, as a location, to potential new grocers, citing the often overlooked, significant traffic that comes into town, from the direction of Haines, but the usual response was that the preferred location would be Campbell Street. In addition, none of the potential grocers expressed the desire to be the first, name brand, national brand company, to locate on the East side of the freeway. "With that said, we're working with a major developer, who owns major real estate in Baker City, who's looking at developing the East side of the freeway, and putting in a significant recreational facility...If that happens, that's going to break loose a lot of economic development...That, in my view, will be a great spur, for additional opportunities. But, that opportunity is not here today, so, I've got to deal with the spaces we do have," he said.

SEE SAFEWAY  
PAGE 9

## Filmmaker visits Baker City

Curtis Bowers, a former math teacher and Idaho State Representative, was in Baker City Saturday for a showing of his second documentary, "Agenda 2 - Masters of Deceit."

About 30 people attended the event held at the Baker County Library.

Bowers' first "Agenda" documentary won a national award and the \$101,000 Grand Prize for "Best of Festival" by SAICFF—the San Antonio Independent Film Festival.

Curtis has traveled all 50 states showing his films, he said. He now lives in Tennessee.

The first 90-minute

"Agenda" documentary took two years of research and was a home school project for his family.

The second "Agenda" installment took four years to complete.

Curtis said it is his family's mission to show the real history of the U.S. and what is happening in today's society.

He encourages everyone to get involved in grassroots politics, become a Precinct Committee Person and spend some time volunteering for local political efforts.

For more information, visit [www.agendadocumentary.com](http://www.agendadocumentary.com).



Submitted Photo.

Bowers (back, middle) and his family accepting a prize for his first documentary.



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