

Business & Ag

BMCC and the County: A more in-depth look at the issues

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During last week's regular Baker County Commission session, on Wednesday, September 21, former Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) Associate Vice President Peggy Hudson brought to the attention of the County Board of Commissioners and the public, issues with the services provided by BMCC, versus funding from the County.

About midway through the session, Commission Chair Bill Harvey introduced the subject, which was originally intended to be discussed during an executive session, in order to consult with County legal counsel Drew Martin, about the legal rights and duties of a public body, with regard to current litigation, or litigation likely to be filed, according to the session agenda.

In order to help determine whether to hold an executive session, Commissioner Mark Bennett asked what the specific issue was (the session agenda didn't include this), and Harvey said it would be a discussion about the "...lack of services being provided by BMCC, and we are generally paying out close to \$850,000 a year, in tax revenue, to the college, and we're obtaining services, roughly, I would say, between \$250,000 and \$300,000 a year, for the past ten years. So, there's quite a deficit in provided services, versus funds that we're investing, from the County...It's a discussion only."

Bennett said he thought it should be an open discussion, rather than going into executive session, that the County is a long way from talk about litigation, and that a work session should be scheduled, to allow all parties involved to discuss the matter publicly and transparently. Harvey said he was actually opposed to involving the County with any discussion about possible litigation, unless litigation were to be pursued, and Kerns said, "I think it's a red flag, if we do it in secret," speaking about the executive session. After more discussion, Bennett made a motion to discuss

the topic, without holding an executive session, Kerns seconded the motion, and it carried.

Hudson, who's worked for BMCC for nine years, said at first that she thought there were legal matters to discuss, and she was reluctant to provide documents initially (she understood the discussion would be held during executive session), but she then provided the Board with copies of research she had compiled, as well as members of the press.

Her 44 pages of documents detailed successes with the BMCC program, as well as issues. She first pointed out a 2012 Baker City Herald article, about the record-setting number of local BMCC graduates that year—41, which included 37 associate degrees. She also mentioned a 2012 *East Oregonian* article, which detailed the same subject.

Further detail from Hudson included FTE (full-time equivalent, an enrollment measurement that doesn't indicate the number of students) analysis and market potential for the County, and "Fast Facts." Between 2005-2006, and 2009-2010, the BMCC Baker campus FTE grew by 300%, according to the fact sheet, and within that same period, overall, the college has grown by 18%. In 2005-2006, 71 FTE for BMCC Baker was noted; in 2006-2007, 114 FTE; in 2007-2008, 139 FTE; in 2008-2009, 157 FTE; in 2009-2010, 203 FTE; and in 2011-2012, 211 FTE (not counting on-line students). The overall growth within that period for all campuses was 400 FTE, with the Baker and Milton/Freewater campuses responsible for 200 of that, according to the document.

An email Hudson provided, addressed from then BMCC President John Turner, to Vice President Clark Williams, on May 2, 2012, included this opening sentence, from Turner: "I was pleased to see the impressive amount of FTE generated by our Branches during the current academic year. Approximately 1/3 of our reimbursable FTE comes from the Branches."

Hudson pointed out that, according to the statements

in the email, the branches—Hermiston, Milton/Freewater, and Baker (there also—generate about 40-45% of the total FTE, and tuition-based revenue.

The next segment of documents included names of graduates, dates of graduation, and certificates earned, and Hudson, at that point, said there was a significant decline in enrollment, noted in the 2013-2014 academic year (15 confirmed graduates, according to the document).

Hudson said, "What happened is, there was a change in the administration...We had a new president (Dr. Camille Preus, pronounced "Proyce," in 2013)... Hudson provided a copy of a letter she had sent to Preus, congratulating her on her presidency, and including positive details about the Baker campus. In that same letter, however, Hudson pointed out initiatives introduced by BMCC, which have caused a decline in enrollment and revenue. These restrictions included: no late add (requiring a student to wait a term, if they registered after the deadline for the current one); a new orientation, requiring the physical presence of students; centralized faculty advising, resulting in communication difficulties for students in Baker, Milton/Freewater, Hermiston, Boardman, and John Day; a prerequisite that caused limited offerings, and more burden on the branches; a new \$25 administration fee; the withdrawal of printed Schedule of Classes; and not allowing paid advisors to have "read only" access to the financial module.

Hudson discussed what she said was part of BMCC's strategic plan for 2008, and again in 2012, objectives under the heading "Integrate And Expand Marketing And Recruiting." According to the last objective in the list, BMCC had planned to increase the percentage of students of Hispanic descent, from 12%, to 25%, by the end of fiscal year 2010.

Hudson said, "Well, what that does for Baker is, each county has a certain percentage of Hispanics. Baker has 2% Hispanic people,

so, Baker is holding them (the BMCC district) down. They're attempting to get 25% Hispanic enrollment (overall), because, when they do that, they can apply for an Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) grant, from the federal government. What that does, is gives them \$5 million—that may be more now..." According to a copy of "BMCC at a Glance" for 2014-2015 Hudson provided, part of the fall course mailer, BMCC was at 24.9% Hispanic enrollment, overall.

Hudson said that BMCC had begun to initiate actions to indicate that investment in the Baker campus would be minimal, causing the campus to be unsuccessful. She then pointed out the last two copies of documents she provided, BMCC head count for 2006-2007, and 2015-2016. For the Baker campus for the period 2006-2007, a head count of 1,047 was noted; and for 2015-2016, a head count of 427. She said Boardman, a small community, had tripled in head count (the number was 228, in 2006-2007, and 649, in 2015-2016), and Baker had declined by 60%. She said, "Why is that? It's by design; because Baker is too white...We lower their percentage."

At the high point of the Baker campus's success was an FTE of 300, but last year, that number dropped to 85, which Hudson said is "ridiculous." She noted that there need to be changes, whether in leadership, and/or with the BMCC/County relationship.

This discussion, a significant segment of the session, went on further, and the Board considered options, including opting out of the BMCC/County relationship, and for the County to have its own community college. Harvey moved to schedule a work session, in order to invite BMCC and School District personnel, to discuss the subject further, Kerns seconded the motion, and it carried. The session is scheduled for Wednesday, October 12, 2016, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse.

— WEEKLY HAY REPORT —

Friday, September 23, 2016 — Eastern Oregon

Prices trended generally steady compared to week ago prices. Most demand lays with the retail/stable hay. According to some producers, horse owners are starting to prefer lower sugar, higher protein hay. Many hay producers are selling or have already sold most of their first and second cutting hay, and are working on later cutting(s) resulting in higher volumes of hay moving.

Tons Price Range Wtd Avg

Alfalfa — Large Square Supreme
150 140.00-140.00 140.00

Timothy Grass — Large Square Good
100 100.00-100.00 100.00

Teff Straw — Large Square Utility
200 55.00-55.00 55.00

USDA Market News Service—AMS.USDA.gov

— CATTLE MARKET REPORT —

Wednesday, September 21, 2016

Vale, Oregon

Cattle sold through the auction: 645

Steer Calves

300-400# Bulk 134.00 - 145.00 Top 147.00
400-500# Bulk 118.00 - 132.50 Top 133.00
500-600# Bulk 117.00 - 127.00 Top 129.00

Heifer Calves

300-400# Bulk 116.00 - 126.00 Top 128.00
400-500# Bulk 112.00 - 126.00 Top 126.50
500-600# Bulk 105.00 - 112.00 Top 113.00

Yearling Steers

600-700# Bulk 112.00 - 122.00 Top 124.50
700-800# Bulk 109.00 - 121.00 Top 123.00
800-900# Bulk 108.00 - 117.00 Top 120.00
900-1,000# Bulk 95.00 - 109.00 Top 116.50

Yearling Heifers

600-700# Bulk 101.00 - 110.00 Top 112.00
700-800# Bulk 98.00 - 110.00 Top 111.00
800-900# Bulk 95.00 - 107.00 Top 108.00
900-1,000# Bulk 93.00 - 102.00 Top 105.00

Thin Shelly Cows 44.00 - 55.00
Butcher Cows 56.00 - 66.00
Butcher Bulls 60.00 - 73.00
Pairs Young N/A
Hfrets. N/A
Stock Cows Young - N/A

ProducersLivestock.com
541-473-3136

— LOG PRICE REPORT —

Price per 1,000 board feet: Northeast Oregon

Currently the local log market is flooded with fire salvage logs. The log buyer for Malheur Lumber Co. stated they have all the logs they need under contract and are not accepting any new purchases. BCC/LLC of La Grande has receive so many burned fire salvage logs they are no longer accepting logs at the La Grande log yard. Any additional pine logs have to be delivered to the Elgin Log yard cut in plywood lengths and to a 8 inch top. For these pine logs cut in plywood lengths, BCC is offering \$280.00/mbf. They are also paying \$420.00/mbf for Doug Fir & Western Larch. For White Fir they are offering \$325.00/mbf. At the Pilot Rock Saw Mill BCC is offering \$360.00/mbf for a 12 to 15 inch top, for 16 to 19 inch top \$400.00/mbf & offering \$425.00/mbf for 20 inch plus top

Courtesy of Arvid Andersen,
Andersen Forestry Consulting

— PRECIOUS METALS REPORT —

Price per ounce, USD

Gold: \$1,326.10

Silver: \$19.23

Platinum: \$1027.15

Palladium: \$715.13

Bloomberg.com

— AG COMMODITIES —

Corn: \$329.25/bu/USD

Wheat: \$403.25/bu/USD

Soybeans: \$945.50/bu/USD

Oats: \$174.00 bu/USD

Rough Rice: \$9.74/cwt/USD

Canola: \$464.70 CAD/mwt

Live Cattle: \$103.63/lb./USD

Feeder Cattle: \$128.03/lb./USD

Lean Hogs: \$46.70/lb./USD

Bloomberg.com

OTEC gives little ones lessons

From the moment the large automated security gate opened up to welcome Mrs. Collier's 2nd grade Haines Elementary class you could hear the exclamations of excitement.

Parading in through the large gate and joining in the chorus of, "Oh, wow," the children, geared up in their school day best, marched into OTEC headquarters and onward for an electrical utility adventure.

Once inside the warehouse yard, they were greeted by OTEC's Manager of Loss Control Jeff Anderson who showed the young visitors some of the equipment and materials used in the industry before guiding them over to view OTEC linemen lifting power poles onto a waiting pole trailer.

"The main focus of

today's tour was for the kids to come in, engage in a bit of learning and enjoy visiting our facilities," said Anderson. "I think that it is great that we had this opportunity to show the way some of the elements we work with come together. Most people have no idea how powerlines come into being or how much maintenance and construction is involved. So, having the children visit and get a tiny glimpse of some of these elements was pretty great."

The children watched transfixed as OTEC lineman Casey Mitchell strapped on his climbing gear and climbed the way up to the very tippy top of a power pole and waved. The next stop on the tour was a visit with OTEC lineman Nick Simons who stepped into



Submitted Photo.

Ms. Collier's 2nd grade class.

a bucket and maneuvered himself 60' in the air to gain access to the rooftop.

"It's important for everyone —especially the little kids to understand just how dangerous linemen's work is," said Anderson. "Lineman work with high voltage day in and day out in all kinds of challenging conditions.

When the power goes out, even if they are sitting with their families opening Christmas presents on Christmas morning, they go out and fix it and it is often in brutal weather conditions. And then, when there is an emergency situation, they are among the first emergency responders. It is incredible."