

Local

County, like City, learns about torrefied wood

• SECOND PLANNING HEARING SCHEDULED ON DANIELS REZONING ISSUE

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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held its first, regular session of the month, on Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, highlights of which include an update from Baker County Economic Development Director Greg Smith, and a hearing in the matter of PA-16-001, a zoning change request from Richard and Lori Daniels.

Present from the Board were Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioners Mark Bennett and Tim Kerns, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin.

Attendance also included Baker County Planning Director Holly Kerns, Baker County Planner Carson Quam, Baker County Emergency Management Manager Jason Yencopal, Baker County Facilities Maintenance Foreman Dan McQuisten, Smith's Economic Development Department Assistant Julee Hicks, the Daniels' consultant John Lackey, Randy Joseph, Ken Anderson, Ed Hardt, John Creighton, Art Sappington, Wanda Ballard, Chuck Chase, and Bobbie Danser.

The optional Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were recited, both led by Harvey, and the agenda was adopted, noting a couple of additions, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns.

Citizen Participation included Sappington, Jefferson Mining District (JMD) Coordinating Officer, who spoke on behalf of both the Virtue Mine, and the JMD, including comments regarding some apparent attempts to revitalize mining, throughout the County, and the State, under the MMAC (Minerals & Mining Advisory Council), including seeking agency status, which he said the JMD does not support. He also mentioned issues with a DOGAMI (Department of Geology and Mineral Industries) report, which he said diminishes the historical significance of mining.

The minutes from the regular session on Wednesday, September 21, 2016 were approved, with a clarification noted, with a motion from Kerns, and a second from Bennett.

Smith provided an Economic Development update similar to that provided to the Baker City Council last week, including, among other items, the potential project the County may facilitate, between interested individuals, and Portland General Electric (PGE), to supply material for PGE's future Boardman torrefied wood power plant (torrefied wood, a renewable, carbon-neutral energy source more energy dense than wood, and almost as dense as coal, is created



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

At left, Rich Daniels addresses the County Commissioners.

from biomass material that undergoes a process called torrefaction).

Smith said that the County could possibly be the regional hub for supplying the material (he noted that Union Pacific's railroad line passes through, a necessary method of transporting the material), an opportunity he's excited about, but the potential project is just in the preliminary stages for now.

Smith mentioned an upcoming Employer Summit, scheduled to be held at the Baker County Conference and Event Center, 2600 East Street, Baker City, on November 1, 2016, from 8 a.m. to approximately noon.

He said that local business owners said they're struggling to find the right employees, as evidenced by a recent survey he conducted, with 57 responses from owners, with about 75% stating they've hired a new employee within the last year. About 70% of the respondents stated they plan to hire another employee within the next year, he said (Smith said, at the time of the session, there were 61 job openings posted at the Employment Department).

Smith said, while the vacant Farewell Bend structures--the hotel, convenience store, gas station--aren't within the County, he sees the chance for some Huntington-based citizens, for example, to have potential future employment opportunities.

He said a developer, Mr. Singh, who owns many other properties, including convenience stores, plans to clean up the property, and develop it, including reopening the convenience store there, and he is asking for potential help from Baker County contractors.

A purchase request, from McQuisten, for a 2017 Chevrolet Equinox LS AWD, for \$22,723, from Baker Garage, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns. McQuisten discussed the details of the request, prior to its approval.

According to the request, both local car dealerships, Baker Garage, and Gentry Dodge Chrysler Jeep Ram, received a request for proposal, and GSA pricing

was also compared. One of the County's carpool vehicles, a 2002 Dodge Caravan with over 170,000 miles, was needed immediately by the Sheriff's Office (their transport vehicle is becoming unserviceable), and it was determined that a five-person SUV would be a more suitable replacement. Proposed funding is from the Equipment Replacement fund, through the Vehicle Replacement line, according to the request.

An Oregon Military Department Office Of Emergency Management (OEM) Grant Agreement No. 16-202, between OEM, and Baker County, was approved to be signed out of session, upon approval from County legal counsel, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns.

According to the agreement, \$103,250 is provided by OEM, for the purpose of purchasing, and installing a backup power source at the Baker County primary emergency operations center (the Courthouse).

Yencopal discussed this agreement with the Board, prior to approval. This is the second phase of the project, as the first phase included the installation of a transfer switch.

The Board discussed an agreement, between the City of Greenhorn, and Baker County (an agreement previously approved), including County lots given to Greenhorn, for the purposes of emergency helicopter landing services, and a park, and the County had agreed that, if Greenhorn did not use the pieces of property, they would be returned to the County.

The County, however, didn't set a time limit, during which Greenhorn would need to make use of the properties.

Bennett moved that Greenhorn be given five years in which to convert the properties, with a possible extension (to be discussed in five years), Kerns seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

A public hearing was held in the matter of Plan Amendment (PA) 16-001, a request from the Daniels, to re-zone an approximate 4.5 acre portion of an approximate 75.32 acre parcel in the North Powder area, from Timber Graz-

ing (TG), to a Limited Use Tourist Commercial Overlay (LUTCO) Zone, an adaptation of the existing Tourist Commercial Zone (TC). Harvey read a hearing statement, regarding procedures and testimony, and he said that a second public hearing would be scheduled for Wednesday, November 2, 2016, 9 a.m. Holly Kerns and Quam provided the Board with details of the request.

The core of the a new issue presented at the session is that this request was modified after the Baker County Planning Commission made a recommendation for approval. On September 16, 2016, the Daniels requested to modify the zone, removing certain uses, and the associated zone area, which the applicants said would lower the impact of the development on surrounding property owners, according to the request.

They changed the requested zone area, from seven acres, to 4.5 acres, and removed the following two items: 10 Limited Service RV Sites, and Bathroom Facility. They left in place the following: 16 Full-Service RV Sites, and "Use of the existing dwelling as a commercial dwelling for business office, caretaker residence, and retail space to accommodate on-site guests."

The Daniels and Lackey provided testimony to support approval of the request, including economic benefits, and efforts to minimize impacts of the development, and the Planning Department Staff Report noted the following: "The findings in the staff report will be affected by the modification, including impacts to property owners, economic development, and recreational need. The staff report includes the findings of the Planning Commission for the original proposal without modification."

After further discussion, Bennett noted that the changes were significant, there were still issues with the request, and that the matter needed to be returned back to the Planning Commission, for review, and Commissioner Kerns noted elk overlay issues.

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Bud Pierce



Suzan Ellis Jones / The Baker County Press

Rancher Curt Martin accompanied Pierce to Harney County.

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Pierce started with talking about the dignity of work, being allowed to work the professions people choose without government interference. He said the economy of eastern Oregon would flourish if regulations weren't prohibiting growth in natural resource industries. Pierce said he was very concerned about the homeless situation in Oregon as well.

The group discussed the Transfer of Public lands issue and Pierce said he had a proposal he broached during the Bend debate to return a percentage of public lands for local control each year, and that generated hate mail. Pierce says local control on any resource is best.

Pierce said he has three points to his message, 1) manufacturing, 2) natural resources and 3) infrastructure development. He says his plan will boost Oregon's economy.

The discussion also included how hard it is to get workers who will do the job in natural resources because it is usually a physical occupation. But finding workers who will be punctual and drug free has become a challenge to employers.

Pierce said freedom is being able to live where one wants to live, and where it is economically viable. Pierce said, "Science is being misused," on NR issues. Pierce has been an oncologist for 40 years; he is a medical doctor and also has his PhD. He owns the last private medical oncology practice in Oregon.

Curt Martin said at the end of the meeting, "The science is there and economically sound and economically viable. Past socialistic propaganda hurts natural resource industries. It becomes obstructionism."

Martin further said he is concerned rural communities are being eliminated.

Martin flew to Harney county with Pierce for his next stop. Martin is advising Pierce on natural resource issues.

Governor to fill Malheur County D.A. position

Governor Brown announced this week she will fill the vacancy for the Malheur District Attorney position following notice of Daniel O. Norris' resignation, effective Oct. 3. Pursuant to ORS 8.640, Governor Brown intends to fill the vacancy created by this resignation by appointment, as provided in Article V, Section 16 of the Oregon Constitution.

The Governor's Office is now accepting applications from candidates with a diversity of backgrounds and experiences. Applicants must submit a District Attorney Interest Form to the Governor's Office. Please note that the District Attorney Interest Form is a distinct form and is not the same form that is used for judicial vacancies. The District Attorney Interest Form is available online at: <http://www.oregon.gov/.../ad.../Pages/Judicial-Appointments.aspx>

Oregon law requires that, at the time of appointment, the appointee must be admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of Oregon (ORS 8.630 and ORS 8.640). District Attorney Interest Forms must be received by the Governor's Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, October 10, 2016.

Notwithstanding the commencement of this appointment process, Governor Brown will not exercise her appointment authority for this vacancy unless and until the Malheur County District Attorney-elect, Circuit Court Judge Erin Landis (who is scheduled to take office in early 2017), resigns as the District Attorney-elect.

Expect delays near Oxbow

Motorists should plan for possible delays on the Brownlee-Oxbow Highway near Oxbow during most of October while work is being done on a rock slope above the road. Beginning Monday, Oct. 3, a drill rig and crane will be working in the area. When this equipment is being moved, the road will be narrowed to a single lane for up to 30 minutes at a time, during daylight hours only. Work will continue on weekends and could extend to Oct. 28.

Traffic control crews will be on hand while the work is taking place. Work is being done on the rock slope south of Idaho Power's Oxbow office and shop.