

# Local

## County hears about Wolf Plan changes

### • COMMISSIONERS ISSUE LETTER TO BLM ON SAGE-GROUSE

BY TODD ARRIOLA  
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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held a regular session on Wednesday, March 15, 2017, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, which included among its topics a Facilities Department update from Baker County Facilities Maintenance Foreman Dan McQuisten, an Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization Local Community Advisory Committee (EOCCO LCAC) update from Charlotte Dudley, and an Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan update from Oregon Department of Wildlife (ODFW) Baker District Wildlife Biologist Brian Ratliff, and Assistant Wildlife Biologist Justin Primus.

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

The meeting was called to order, and Harvey provided the Invocation, and led in the Pledge of Allegiance. The agenda was adopted, with some noted additions, with a motion from Nichols, and a second from Bennett.

Citizen Participation included Mary Miller, referencing an article from the March 3, 2017 issue of *The Baker City Herald*, who spoke about what she said was an “anti-environmentalist” comment from Harvey, regarding litigation from certain environmental groups, concerning temperatures in bodies of water, and she said it was a “very partisan” statement, and that the Commission should be more bi-partisan.

Harvey said the comment was his personal opinion about the groups, and thanked Miller for her thoughts on the subject.

The minutes from the Wednesday, March 1, 2017 regular session were approved, with a motion from Nichols, and a second from Bennett.

The Board discussed Order No., 2017-117, Board of Property Tax Appeals Summary of Actions, and Nichols spoke about the different pieces of associated property, and the status of each (a document was included with the Order, with property values and totals).

The Order was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey.

McQuisten provided a Facilities Department update, first speaking about staff—himself, two part-time, and two full-time employees, and about the department’s different roles, such as exterior building maintenance, on all County-owned properties. Interior maintenance includes HVAC, electrical, plumbing, fire suppression systems, video monitoring (some work is contracted out, he said).

McQuisten listed some completed projects last year, including a new shake roof on the Leo Adler House Museum, foundation work for the Road Department’s storage building, new gutters and downspouts for the Courthouse building, and Courthouse tree removal work (in conjunction with the five-year tree plan). Projects this year includes purchasing a generator for the Courthouse backup power system, stone work around the Courthouse, and County Jail plumbing, HVAC, and roof upgrades. He said that, in spite of this winter’s weather, County buildings have survived well, overall.

The Board expressed appreciation to McQuisten for his department’s efforts, including to other departments.

Dudley provided an EOCCO LCAC update, and she first outlined the general purpose and roles of the EOCCO, the primary focus of which are the Oregon Health

Plan (OHP), and Medicaid program, and ensuring people are receiving the proper services, and access to services. She said the LCAC received \$34,700 last year, and projects to utilize those funds includes colo-rectal cancer screening, yearly teen physicals, and addressing the effects of depression.

She said that the colo-rectal screening event was very successful in raising awareness, and around 140 children received sports physicals, during its associated event. She said New Directions, Northwest, Inc. received \$80,000 last year from EOCCO, for the purpose of behavioral health services.

This year, she said, the LCAC received \$48,000, including for community education purposes, and one primary focus is the reduction of tobacco use. Harvey asked about addressing adolescent marijuana use, and Dudley said that conversation came up, but the committee hasn’t decided yet.

Harvey said, “I hope you’ll try to integrate it...” and Dudley said it makes sense, and she’ll suggest that to the committee.

The Board thanked Dudley for her efforts, recognizing that there are funding issues involved.

Ratliff and Primus provided a Wolf Plan update, with Ratliff first speaking about Phase III (which only eastern Oregon is now in), the final phase of the Plan.

He said that there isn’t much of a change between Phase II and Phase III as far as management, except that now, “...it allows (U.S.) Wildlife Services, if they choose to do so, to conduct depredation investigations...”

He said that, from a livestock producer standpoint, nothing really has changed, from Phase II, to Phase III.

Bennett said, “At what point do you make a determination...” about when to order a kill on a wolf (remove it).

Ratliff said (after explaining chronic depredation, trying non-lethal

methods, etc.), “Basically, what it boils down to is...” chronic depredation, and, if the removal of wolves decreases that depredation, and lessens the damage (with livestock), then, the department will order it.

Harvey asked about a “...government plan to bring wolves back,” and Ratliff said, “The State of Oregon never, ever, has once—ever—moved, or reintroduced the wolf...” to Oregon. Ratliff said that other state governments have moved wolves into adjoining states (Idaho is one example), which is why the Oregon Wolf Plan was developed, anticipating the migration of wolves to Oregon, necessitating a management plan.

Ratliff spoke about the increasing wolf population in Oregon—having just documented eight breeding pairs, a threshold number for the move to Phase III—and Bennett expressed concern that one County could have the burden of dealing with wolf issues (Wallowa is where the majority of the wolf population is located), but that should mean northeast Oregon should have more tools to address those issues.

Harvey spoke about the increasing livestock losses in this area, and he said, half-jokingly, “We’re all in favor of trapping and moving them to the Willamette Valley, and we’d go out there and help you, if you’d like.”

Ratliff said, “That’s not on the table...” prompting some laughter.

Mike Durgan (of the Baker County Wolf Depredation Compensation Committee) asked about the claimed number of wolves in Baker County (he said the information is that there are three collared wolves, a low number, and Ratliff confirmed there are three), and about the possibility of dispersing wolves moving in to areas of known wolf activity (AKWA), and poaching cattle, and Ratliff spoke about the constant efforts to track wolves, and about the debated number of wolves, versus the number

of claimed livestock depredations.

U.S. Forest Service Hydrologist Suzanne Fouty spoke about the positive contributions to (and from) wolves, and in improving wolf-livestock interactions, by addressing water supply/irrigation issues, enhancing landscapes, and finding a balance.

Harvey and Bennett both spoke about the importance of the beef industry to the area, and about livestock producers needing to be able to address depredation issues.

Bennett also spoke about the local efforts in implementing non-lethal methods, and Harvey spoke about the local efforts in dealing with drought situations, both of which are challenging.

Miller asked Ratliff about the use of the M-44 cyanide dispersing device, one which was placed by Wildlife Services to control coyotes, that had killed the Shamrock Wolf Pack member known as OR48. Ratliff said that ODFW doesn’t use the M-44, in any way, shape, or form, and that ODFW has sent communication to Wildlife Services, to request that Wildlife Services discontinue the use of the M-44, as well as unregulated snares.

Ratliff said, in looking at the wolf population, there are many factors in determining what is acceptable, not just their numbers versus deer, elk, livestock, etc., and there are many different groups with an interest in affecting management of Oregon wolves.

He said that, one the draft updated Wolf Plan is released in April, the public should provide comments.

Order No. 2017-116, An Order Setting Forth The Boundaries Of The Proposed Annexation Into The Baker Rural Fire Protection District, was approved, with a notion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

Baker Rural Fire Chief Dan Weitz, using a map, discussed the Order and

associated details with the Board, prior to its approval.

He said that all of the associated landowners, except one, requested the annexation.

Amendment No. 11 To Oregon Health Authority 2015-2017 Intergovernmental Agreement For The Financing Of Community Addictions And Mental Health Services Agreement No. 147781, was ratified, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

Harvey introduced a draft letter, addressed to Mark Machiewicz, of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), regarding County comments to The Notice of Proposed Withdrawal: Sagebrush Focal Areas: Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Wyoming.

Members of the Baker County Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC) were instrumental in forming these comments, which support a “No Action Alternative.”

The Board discussed some changes to the letter with NRAC Chair Doni Bruland, and requested she make the changes, and it was approved to be sent to applicable entities, with changes, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

Harvey introduced a second letter, which addresses mining approval timelines, with the U.S. Forest Service, and the BLM.

The Board also discussed this topic with Bruland, who explained the purpose of the letter, which points out issues with federal rules, regulations, and policies, and requests transfer of management of all minerals to the BLM.

Local miner Ed Hardt added his comments to the discussion (Hardt has spoken numerous times on the subject, and he has experienced major years-long delays himself).

The letter was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

## Economic Development: Grocery Outlet a no-go in Baker City, upcoming events discussed

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The Baker County Economic Development Council (EDC) held its regular meeting on Tuesday, March 14, 2017, noon, in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, which included, among other topics, the answer to the question of whether there will be a Grocery Outlet in Baker City: no, at least for now.

Attendance included EDC Chair Craig Ward, Baker County Commission Chair Bill Harvey, Baker City Manager Fred Warner, Jr., Baker Technical Institute (BTI) Director Jerry Peacock, Baker Baker Garage Owner Randy Daugherty, Thatcher’s Ace Hardware owner Scott Thatcher, Baker City Community Development/Executive Assistant/IT Liaison Robin Nudd, Baker County Chamber of Com-

merce Executive Director Shelly Cutler, Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) Baker County Director Dan Koopman, Historic Baker City (HBC) President Larry Abell, Governor’s Office Regional Solutions Coordinator Scott Fairley, Oregon Trail Livestock Supply Manager Martin Arritola, BMCC Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Advisor Jeff Nelson, Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD) Loan Officer Mike Ogan, Baker County Economic Development Director Greg Smith, Smith’s assistant, Julee Hicks, and Baker County Tourism Marketing Director Tim Bishop.

Ward called the meeting to order, the minutes from the last meeting were approved, and Ward provided a Chair Report, commenting that commodity prices have recovered somewhat, though very few potatoes

have been shipped out currently (which he said is good, and bad).

Harvey provided a Commission Chair update, speaking about winter weather and Snake River Road issues (he said there were twelve snow slides). He said there are river access issues in Richland, but there are efforts being made to remedy that, including concrete work, but there are anticipated monetary losses and canceled projects.

He spoke about the issues associated with accommodating the anticipated number of people during the solar eclipse, August 21, 2017.

He said that, with enough education, advertising, and effort, visitors to the County can be dispersed more evenly, in order to lessen the burden (any talk on this subject has included positive points about the economic and other benefits of tourism to



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L-R: Economic Development meeting attendees Jeff Nelson, Randy Daugherty, Jeff Peacock and Mike Ogan.

Baker County, as well).

As part of a City Manager update, among other topics, Warner, Jr. said that

the Baker City Golf Course is open, and there are some positive discussions and ideas regarding junior

golf, as well as with other subjects.

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