

Local

Chamber hosts latest eclipse meeting in Baker City

BY SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
Samantha@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Wednesday, June 7th, the Baker County Chamber of Commerce hosted Baker City Eclipse Meeting at the Baker County Event Center. The meeting provided information about preparing businesses, emergency services and personal preparedness, and lodging and camping.

Attending and speaking at the event were Ida Hastings proprietor of At Lasta Home and RV Park in Huntington, Jason Yencopal of Baker County Emergency Management, Shelly Cutler the Executive Director of the Baker County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau, Holly Kerns the Planning Director of the Baker County Planning Department, Sheriff Travis Ash, and Timothy Bishop the head of Baker County Marketing.

Alice Trindle, the Executive Director of the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association also spoke at the event.

Other speakers included Ned Ratterman, Director of Engineering and Operations for Oregon Trail Electric Co-op and Lara Petittlerc-Stokes the Manager of Communications and Government Affairs for Oregon Trail Electric Co-op.

"This is a huge event for Oregon and for the nation," stated Bishop. "This is the first time we've had a complete solar eclipse crossing the United States since 1979."

Bishop explained that Baker County will have about 50,000 people and the closer we get to the event those numbers are becoming more realistic. Oregon is expecting to get a little over a million visits for this event.

"We're super excited about the event but we also, I think, are really nervous about how do we handle that many visitor in Baker County," Bishop explained. "I know that the last couple of weekends have been busy for us; Memorial Day weekend, we had a great turnout; up at the Interpretive Center, in Sumpter for the Flea Market, those numbers were probably about a

tenth of what we expect for the eclipse."

Bishop explained that they are expecting this to be a Wednesday to Wednesday event.

He said a lot of people arriving for the event will be going to the coast. They are hearing an estimate of about 350,000 people will be heading to central Oregon, around Redmond, Madras, Prineville, and Mitchell.

He explained that a lot will be passing through Baker and most of our lodgers are requiring a three-day stay.

Bishop explained that the path of totality is 70 miles wide, North to South. It covers almost all of Baker County and, depending on where you are, you will see 40 seconds to two and a half minutes of totality. "If you're the North part of Baker County, you're going to be in the path of totality," explained Bishop. "If you're in Richland, if you're in New Bridge, and right on the edge of totality if you're in Sparta. If you're in Halfway, you're going to want to come down to New Bridge to watch the path of totality." Bishop explained that at some point, the people who are traveling to Oregon, will need to get gas, ice, and groceries.

He said that getting ready for that has been really important. They are talking to business owners to prepare for ten times their normal customer loads. He explained that they will need to go to the bank and get smaller change. They are also working with gas stations to order more gas to prepare for the incoming travelers.

"The ultimate thing for us," said Bishop. "We know that we locally have to be prepared because we know that Safeway is going to be inundated, we know that the gas stations are going to be inundated, so it's that being prepared in advance. It's knowing that there is no lodging left in our local hotels, so we're looking at alternative lodging options. And then it's really understanding that 50,000 people is just a lot of people moving around on a lot of our narrow two laned roads, some of them not knowing where they're going."

There will be 20 events

happening during that weekend of the eclipse. There will be events in Sumpter, Music in the Meadow that is an annual event that happens that same weekend, and Huntington will have Pioneer Days.

Trindle talked about what the Eclipse means for Oregon and some of the work they are doing as a region.

She explained that three years ago, she was receiving phone calls about getting ready for the eclipse and realized that every room in Mitchell and Madras have been booked for three years.

Trindle explained that they believe we will see one million people and 45% of that will be international visitors and they will be here for an extended period of time.

She also explained that they are expecting somewhere around 1,000 media to come to Oregon for the eclipse.

EOVA is working with local teams and county teams and have just produced a "Know Before You Go" brochure with information for visitors and residents. They have purchased 10,000 eclipse viewing glasses.

Hastings explained that Huntington is setting up vendor booths and Pioneer Days for the event. She explained that their biggest thing is they don't have any volunteers and they are making calls asking for help from their neighboring cities.

Yencopal discussed that for people arriving, it's all about the totality. He encouraged people to buy solar viewers for eye safety. He also explained that the reason people are coming to Oregon is because we are expecting to have clear skies during that time.

He explained that they are expecting bumper to bumper traffic and first responders will do their best to get around that. Cell phone networks will probably be overloaded.

He encourages people to store what they eat so they will eat what they store.

Sheriff Ash discussed that there will be roughly 60 police officers on duty for the region. He explained that all of the Sheriffs are working together for this event and

people may see a Clatsop County police car show up to handle a call.

Some of the minor calls, they may not be able to get to.

Cutler explained that if anyone is interested in opening their private property to camping and lodging, it needs to be self-contained, as there are no longer port potties. If people are interested, they are encouraged to call Cutler at the Baker County Chamber of Commerce.

Cutler explained that they will be working with business owners to share information with the community to help incoming viewers, such as where to go and where not to go. She also encouraged people to talk with their children's or grandchildren's schools about doing a fundraiser during the eclipse to raise money for their schools, clubs, and sports teams.

Kerns is the one who will help people set up their land for camping or lodging. She explained that people will be given permits and they will help emergency services with knowing where people are in case of an emergency.

Petitlerc-Stokes explained that they are encouraging members to fill in prescriptions, for people living within city limits they are encouraged to limit their vehicle usage in the city because the roads will be congested in the counties they serve. They have also started a safety radio campaign and they are emphasizing electrical safety and they have campaigns for generator safety.

Ratterman explained that they are taking this event very seriously.

He discussed that they are still in a situation where there is only so much that they can serve. They do not have generators to supply as back up for people. They are making sure that their inventory levels are appropriate as well as man power for the event.

He explained that their biggest concern is communication, as the cell and land lines fill up quickly, and they are trying to do everything they can, and they have an emergency work plan.

County Commissioners



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

Nick Myatt attended this week's County Commissioners' session to voice property proposal concerns.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Kerns and Quam introduced the matter, explaining some details, and Harvey asked for any further testimony in favor of the application, which was submitted by the Daniels.

No further testimony in favor was offered; however, Loennig provided testimony in opposition, stating issues with increased traffic, possible expansion, and fire protection, among other concerns.

Hoffman mentioned a letter from attorney Steven J. Joseph, of La Grande, in opposition, which Hoffman wished to enter into the record, and the hearing was postponed for 20 minutes, while Hoffman acquired copies of the letter, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

The letter, which was read aloud by Harvey, was entered into the record. Harvey asked if the applicants wished to provide rebuttal, and they stated they didn't. The letter indicated Goal 5 issues, but Bennett said that the statements were too broad and confusing, and the public hearing was closed, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

The application was approved, with a motion from Harvey, and a second from Bennett. Kerns read the ordinance by title only, and the ordinance was adopted, with a motion from Harvey, and a second from Bennett.

A Sumpter Dredge tailings discussion was held, which included reference to copies of the notes from the Wednesday, September 7, 2016 session, provided by Martin. Several issues and concerns were discussed, among them the size of the mining test parcel, whether it would be a single parcel or two parcels, royalties to the County, the majority of Sumpter citizens having expressed opposition to the project, and the cost of the Request For Proposals (RFP), and how the County would recoup that cost.

Anderson and Hardt again provided significant input on the subject matter, and the Board discussed the various concerns, ultimately making the decision to move forward with the process, the first step being the RFP, with a motion from Harvey, and a second from Bennett.

In accordance with Tax Refund Resolution No. 98-01, dated April 15, 1998, a total of \$8,461.26 was approved to be refunded for tax year 2016, to the following, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey, with Nichols recusing himself: \$4,853.26 to Dennis Radford/Heritage Imaging; \$1,473.80 to William Zikmund; \$638.27 to Steve and Sandra Oman; \$374.06 to Mark and Julie Pollock; \$294.48 to Mitch and Amanda Grove; \$233.80 to Roger Nelson, Jr.; \$222.07 to Marvin Endicott; \$217.44 to Bryce Kamedula; \$121.66 to Robert and Sherry Buxton; \$28.49 to Travis Fields; and \$3.93 to Bob Black/Poor Farm.

Order No. 2017-135, Appointing A Member To The Baker County Weed Board, and Order No. 2017-136, Re-Appointing Members To The Baker County Weed Board, were approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

According to Order No. 2017-135, Cynthia "Cookie" Long was appointed, her term set to expire on April 1, 2018; and according to Order No. 2017-136, Bob Colton and Bill Shumway were re-appointed, their terms set to expire on April 1, 2019.

Order No. 2017-137, Appointing A Member To The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District Budget Board, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

According to the order, Bryan Tweit was appointed, his term set to expire on December 31, 2020.

Sumpter City Council

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Credit Card Limits

McKinney explained the City has two cards with a credit limit of \$1250 each and that they run into a lot of trouble juggling funds when needing to make purchases for the Fire Department and City office. She requested that the office card limit be increased to \$5,000 and the public works limit to \$2500. Clarke commented that all purchases are accountable at the end of the month and this would make things easier. Council unanimously voted to approve the increases.

Flea Market Fees

Clarke asked if the City

made any money on the last flea market. McKinney stated the City will not make anything and that there must be something to put back into the buildings and for wear and tear. She stated space rent at the Grounds is three dollars per foot, making it the cheapest venue in the State.

Rowan stated a permit elsewhere is thousands of dollars.

McKinney added that vendors are also charged a percentage of income elsewhere. Vendor licenses for the Sumpter Flea Market are \$40 for regular vendors and \$70 for food vendors. Electricity charge is \$35.

Clarke stated Sumpter can't afford to be the

cheapest venue.

He said the town doesn't need to bring in a lot, but has to at least make money. He suggested hiring one more person on the City side next year to handle all the garbage.

Rowan volunteered to call around about fees at other venues. Clarke motioned to increase space rent to five dollars per foot for the Labor Day Flea Market and increase the vendor license fee to \$50 for regular vendors and \$80 for food vendors.

After discussion, the Council decided to grandfather in those vendors who have already paid for this year and the motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent's House

McKinney explained the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department requires that Council take a vote for approval of the no-cost title transfer of the Superintendent's House. They will need the minutes with the specific wording to proceed. Clarke motioned to approve the transfer. Motion passed unanimously.

Armbruster asked what happens next. McKinney stated the minutes will be sent to OPRD and they will send a deed to the City.

SEE SUMPTER COUNCIL PAGE 10

Friends of the Library book sale coming

The Friends of the Baker County Library will hold its summer book sale from Friday, July 14 through July 23, at the library.

The sale runs for two weekends, plus the week in between.

Volunteers are needed for sales, set up, and final clean up.

Volunteers receive a \$20 gift certificate to use at the sale or in the Library Book Shop.

To volunteer, sign up at the circulation desk in the Library, call Julianne Williams at 541-523-3560, or Barbara Haynes at 541-523-6596.