

Local

Rep. Bentz gives legislative update to County

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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held its second, regular session of the month on Wednesday, August 16, 2017, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, which included a legislative update from District 60 Republican State Representative Cliff Bentz.

Present from the Board were Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioners Mark Bennett and Bruce Nichols, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin. Attendance also included Blue Mountain Community College Small Business Development Center (BMCC SBDC) Advisor Jeff Nelson, Art Sappington, Sherrie Conklin, Bobbie Danser, Ed Hardt, Ken Anderson, and John Creighton.

Harvey called the meeting to order, provided the Invocation, and led in recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. The agenda was adopted, with no noted additions or changes, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Harvey.

Citizen Participation included Hardt, Nelson, and Sappington. Hardt said that the U.S. Forest Service is requiring miner Tom Griffith to provide a bond of \$5,000 for a bridge in the Eagle Creek area, and there is a question of Revised Statute (RS) 2477 road status.

Harvey provided some road maps which Hardt and Anderson investigated during the session.

Nelson discussed a few topics, among them, ribbon cuttings for three new businesses, held on Thursday, August 17, 2017: Chill'z Frozen Yogurt, at 1 p.m., Appliances & More, at 2 p.m., and MC Taco Bus, at 3 p.m.

Nelson said that the dedication for the Baker City Labyrinth, located along the Leo Adler Memorial Pathway in Central Park (east of Resort Street, between Washington and Valley avenues), is scheduled for Saturday, August 19, 2017, 10 a.m.

Nelson also discussed the next SBDC-sponsored "Pub Talk," titled "Suc-

cess in Women-Owned Businesses," scheduled for Thursday, August 31, 2017, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., at Lefty's Tap House, 1934 Broadway Avenue, Baker City.

The event includes speakers Janet Soto from Business Oregon, Amy Pearl from Hatch Oregon, Lisa Dawson from the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD), Garla Rowe from Haines Sell Rite, Yeni Arteaga from MC Taco Bus, and Gaynell Nielsen from the Blue Door Inn.

Sappington requested the Board look into the possibility of a County ordinance to address issues with RS 2477 road closure and gate status, and he mentioned specifically the H.A. Stevens Road, in the County.

The minutes from the Wednesday, August 2, 2017 regular session were approved, with no noted changes, with a motion from Harvey, and a second from Bennett.

Intergovernmental Agreement No. 11084, between the County and the Oregon Department of Education Youth Development Division, for the second stream of grant funding for the purpose of juvenile crime prevention, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Bruce.

According to the agreement, the County will be reimbursed by the State, of up to \$45,000, for expenses incurred in providing crime prevention services.

Temporary closures of Durbin Creek and Lime roads, due to the Total Solar Eclipse event (August 21, 2017), were approved, with a motion from Harvey, and a second from Bennett.

According to the discussion, these closures were authorized by County Road Master Jeff Smith. The Board also discussed the possibility of temporarily closing Marble Creek Road.

Bentz provided a legislative update, which included a slide show presentation, and copies of a handout regarding the benefits of investing in transportation, in antipa-



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

Rep. Cliff Bentz visited Baker City Wednesday to give updates on the last legislative session to Baker County Commissioners.

tion of the increases in fuel tax, over the course of the next seven years.

Among the topics discussed is the continuing situation with the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), which Bentz says is "out of control," an issue he said was created 35 years ago, and because of bad decisions, has not yet been resolved by the State.

He said, "Oregonians continue to vote for ballot measures without voting for taxes to pay for them," using Measure 98, the High School Graduation and College and Career Readiness Act of 2016, as an example (he voted no on the measure, which passed by a large percentage).

Bentz said that the public is often misinformed or uninformed, about the lack of funding available to support a program, referencing the State's \$1.8 billion shortfall.

Of 80 bills Bentz had drafted, only four passed, he said (the hospital provider tax bill, the transportation package bill, the tax credit bill, and the fish screen tax bill), emphasizing the difficulty with the process and in gaining support for a bill.

Among other bills and

taxes discussed, Bentz said that the \$5.3 million State transportation package was passed, which will mean \$250,000 in additional infrastructure and maintenance funding for Baker City each year, as well as \$786,000 for Baker County.

Bentz said that he supported neither House Bill 2705, nor House Bill 2706, aimed at measuring water usage at points of diversion and charging water rights users an annual management fee, which he said is unfair and "simply wrong."

He said, "92% of the water generated in Oregon goes to the ocean... There are a lot of people using the 92%... Have they been asked to pay for it? No..." a point he emphasized nobody had bothered to make before.

He said that the bills were not passed, but he has no doubt they will be presented again.

In reference to the battle over the State's complicated low-carbon fuel standard, Bentz said, "I'm sure this is why I had a heart attack—I mean it..." He explained why he was so worried about the bill—the significant increases in cost felt at the gas pump, without resulting in any reduction in CO2 levels.

He explained that most drivers probably don't know what extra cost they're paying at the pump (about 1/2 cent per gallon currently for the program), but that it could be 22 cents per gallon at some point, which he said the majority of Oregonians will not support, if they're aware of it.

He said he was successful in getting that type of cost information passed into law.

Bentz said that the 950 miles of Baker County-owned roads ranks 35th among the 36 Oregon counties, as far as condition is concerned. "You guys are in bad shape here, and you know it..." which is why the Board pushed for Bentz to acquire funding for infrastructure and maintenance for the County, he said.

Bentz said that he plans to focus on three major issues between now and the 2019 regular legislative session—spending, revenue reform, and PERS.

He said that he people can come together to accomplish goals, as he noted there has been major divide among parties, and Harvey said that one-party State control has been devastating.

Bentz can be reached at

541-888-8866, or cliff-bentz@oregonlegislature.gov.

After a short break, Resolution No. 2017-1026, Appropriation Of Unanticipated Funds To Be Expended In The Veterans Department Of The General Fund, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

According to the resolution, \$42,353 in pass-through funds was received from the State of Oregon Veterans' Affairs.

During Commissioner Update, the Board discussed the County's preparation for the weekend of the Total Solar Eclipse, which Bennett said, among other resources, will include 16 Sheriff patrol cars and additional dispatchers, 25 Army National Guard personnel to patrol the I-84 corridor, five helicopters, and two Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) tow trucks.

All three Commissioners said they will be present throughout the weekend, and Harvey said that the County Courthouse will be closed between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Monday, August 21, in order for staff to have an opportunity to view the eclipse.

Inmate found dead at correctional facility

An Oregon Department of Corrections inmate died unexpectedly late Saturday night at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla. As with all unanticipated deaths in state prisons, the Oregon State Police Criminal Investigation Division is conducting

an investigation.

At approximately 9:39 p.m. on Saturday, August 12, 2017, Benjamin Yzaguirre, 64, was found unresponsive in his cell. Security and medical staff immediately began life-saving efforts, which continued by Umatilla

Emergency Medical Technicians, to no avail. Yzaguirre was transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced deceased at 10:55 p.m.

Yzaguirre entered DOC custody on July 2, 2015, on one count of rape and one count of sodomy out

of Marion County. His expected release date was June 11, 2021.

Next of kin has been notified. No other details are available at this time.

TRCI is a multi-custody prison in Umatilla that houses approximately 1,800 male inmates. TRCI

participates in prison industries with Oregon Corrections Enterprises including institution and industrial laundry, mattress manufacturing, and sewing. Other institutional work programs include reparation and cleaning of irrigation ditches, main-

tenance of local baseball fields, and work with local cities and the Hermiston School District. The facility provides a range of correctional programs and services including education, religious services and behavioral health services. TRCI opened in 2000.

Tripcheck launches statewide speed map

In an update to Oregon's traffic and road conditions website, TripCheck, motorists can now see how fast (or slow) traffic is moving on nearly all roads across Oregon.

Previously, this feature was only available in the Portland metro area and was called the Portland

Speed Map. Now, a new statewide layer of data is using near real-time traffic congestion information to reflect movement on roadways throughout Oregon. ODOT has partnered with Esri/ HERE to provide the traffic data.

When you visit TripCheck.com, simply zoom

in to see the traffic flow on the various roads. Traffic is displayed as a percentage of free-flow speeds (frequently the speed limit or more practically, how fast cars tend to travel when unencumbered by other vehicles). The streets are color-coded as follows: Green (fast): 85 - 100%

of free-flow speeds

Yellow (moderate): 65 - 85%

Orange (slow): 45 - 65%

Red (stop and go): 0 - 45%

When you are on the website, to see what the colors mean, click on the Live Traffic drop down menu on the left.

There, you'll also see another significant enhancement to TripCheck: the interactive map legend. The map layer controls are now integrated with the legend, simplifying the layout and providing a cleaner mobile experience.

You can click on layers such as Waze Traffic to add

or remove information.

TripCheck will receive another update later this year with a refreshed interface for searching text reports.

This update will allow users to create custom queries to search for incidents, weather, cameras and more based on their criteria.